

Snowflake



The Snowflake Trust

Night Shelter Report

for



Winter 2017/18

Report issued on

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1. Introduction from the Chair of Trustees

This Annual Report for Winter 2017/18 has been prepared for the benefit of all interested parties and stakeholders so that everyone may be aware of the range and depth of services delivered, the immense amount of (mainly) voluntary work required to provide the night shelter on every night of the week during the coldest months of the year, and the important outcomes achieved. It should be noted that in 2017 the Hastings rough sleeper count increased by 54% in comparison to a national average of 15% (see Para 3a below).

This sixth year of operation of the night shelter has been characterised by a number of very significant developments, including:

- The night shelter remaining open until mid March 2018
 - Following feedback from Guests and Volunteers
- Improved Guest outcomes
 - While it is becoming ever more difficult for Guests to move into their own accommodation due to the lack of local authority housing and increased rents by private landlords, nevertheless we were delighted that 24 of our Guests had been enabled to move on in their lives (16 in 2016/17 and 12 in 2015/16). In particular, the increasing number of young Guests has resulted in greater use of YMCA facilities for moving on, and we are very grateful to the local YMCA staff for their help and assistance
- Greater awareness of Snowflake amongst the local population of Hastings & St Leonards
 - The website considerably updated, and
 - The Facebook page has been further developed
- More grant-making Trusts supporting the night shelter
 - The generous support of the Sussex Community Foundation, The Police & Crime Commissioner and various other local and national trusts has continued
- More organisations fundraising for the night shelter
 - Local churches and a plethora of other organisations now support the night shelter, and a full list is available below
- More individuals donating, and more contributing by monthly standing order
 - Greater awareness amongst the local population led to many more individuals donating, with more now contributing on a monthly basis
- More volunteers trained than ever before
 - 75 volunteers were trained by St John Ambulance trainers in first aid/addiction this year, and many also completed a level 2 qualification in Food Safety

- More staff employed
 - This winter, the trust employed seven new staff
 - The Trustees engaged in an independently facilitated Away Day in May 2018 and have taken the opportunity actively to consider the organisation of the night shelter for the future. Plans have been developed and will be published to Volunteers and on the website in due course
- Involvement with the Hastings Borough Council "Rough Sleeper and Street Community Working Group"
 - This follows a concerted effort by the Snowflake trustees and others to seek to coordinate services for local homeless people to ensure the best possible support and outcomes for them throughout the year
- Financial Security
 - Whilst fundraising for the future will be necessary, the Trust is in its best financial position in its short history
- Developing the Board of Trustees
 - It is appropriate to acknowledge with due appreciation the contributions of Peter Bourner & George Hornsby, both of whom resigned their Trustee positions during the year. Trustees are delighted that Kevin Swaffer and Matthew Thompsett have joined the Board bringing many skills with them for the benefit of the Trust.
 - A sub-group of the Board has been formed to identify those skills still required to be made available to the Board and to spearhead the search for new Trustees to provide the required expertise.

There is much information about The Snowflake Trust on the website at www.snowflake-nightshelter.org.uk, and further enquiries are welcome via the 'Contact Us' tab or by post to the registered office.

(Original signed)

Andrew Charles Crighton Chair of Trustees

2. The Night Shelter

a. *The Night Shelter Explained*

The Snowflake Night Shelter is a temporary rolling night shelter based on the 'Shelter in a Pack' model published jointly by *Housing Justice* and the *Church Urban Fund*.

Now in its sixth year, the Shelter ran from, 30 November 2017 to 20 March 2018, 110 days, with the following aims:

- To provide a night shelter for genuinely homeless people who would otherwise be sleeping rough in Hastings and St Leonards during the extreme winter months
- With respect and without discrimination, to engage church members and local people generally with some of the most vulnerable people in the Town in line with Christian principles
- To provide a warm bed, non-judgemental hospitality and engagement with willing Volunteers to facilitate wellbeing and positive self-esteem
- Hot drinks, an evening meal and breakfast
- In liaison with specialist agencies, encouragement in accessing relevant longer-term solutions to individual housing and employment needs

The Shelter was originally established in 2012 upon the original initiative of Fr John Cavanagh OFM Cap, a Franciscan priest working with other concerned citizens, when he was allocated by his Order to work in the Borough on Social Outreach among marginalised persons. Fr John remains in touch with the Trust and is its 'Official Visitor'.

b. *Governance*

The Trust employed Lesley Crighton in the new role of Senior Project Supervisor, with Biff Mooney as Assistant Project Supervisor. Both Lesley and Biff will be working throughout 2017 to enable continued liaison and knowledge of Guests and their needs prior to the Shelter opening in November; liaising with other agencies/organisations to ensure mutual understanding of services provided; and undertaking training as required. The Trust also employed Emma Pepper, Sharon Groves (part) and Jamie Bourner as Overnight Supervisors whilst the Shelter was open (Volunteers for the overnight shifts were in relatively short supply); and Bill Sukhbir and Graham Hodgson (part) as Morning Supervisors.

The Board of Trustees provided general oversight of the project

c. Operational Arrangements

During the time the Shelter was open, the Senior Project Supervisor was based in an office at The Seaview Project, Hatherley Road, St Leonards, where she and a Trustee interviewed potential Guests on a daily basis. It is appropriate to pay tribute to Lesley and the staff and Volunteers at The Seaview Project for their commitment to marginalised folk and the wise counsel and professionalism which has characterised all their dealings.

The normal operation of the Shelter was:

- 6pm Evening Shift Volunteers arrive at the venue to meet the Senior Project Supervisor or Assistant Project Supervisor and Venue Coordinator, set up the accommodation, arrange activities and begin food preparation
- 7pm Guests arrive and are welcomed to the Shelter
- 10.30pm Overnight Supervisor and Volunteers take over, 'Lights Out' at 11pm
- 6.30am Morning Supervisor and Volunteers arrive and commence breakfast preparation
- 8.30am Shelter packed up and everything loaded onto the Snowflake van, hall and facilities cleaned, and Guests and Volunteers leave.

The Trust operates its own van enabling an effective arrangement for the daily transfer of goods between venues. Stock not required on a daily basis is maintained in storage facilities.

d. Venues

The Shelter relies on the goodwill of 7 local churches to provide the nightly venues, none of which were designed to be slept in - we are immensely grateful for the efforts made by the various communities to ensure that the accommodation is made as warm and homely as possible for the Guests. Everyone is most appreciative of the support of the various Church communities raising awareness, fundraising and covering the hidden costs of heating, lighting.

The actual venues for this winter were:

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday | St Matthews Church Centre, Silverhill |
| Monday | The Salvation Army Citadel, St Andrews Square, Hastings |
| Tuesday | St Mary Star of the Sea, Hastings Old Town |
| Wednesday | Wellington Square Baptist Church, Hastings |
| Thursday | St Leonards Baptist Church, Chapel Park Community Centre, St Leonards |
| Friday | St John's Church, Brittany Road, St Leonards |
| Saturday | Parish of the Good Shepherd, Concordia Hall, St Leonards |

3. People Involved

a. *Guests*

A very different group of *Guests* when compared with previous years (with more younger *Guests*) was welcomed, and many happy moments have been shared in an atmosphere where *Guests* were not judged but listened to and heard. Whilst unfortunately 3 *Guests* had to be banned for inappropriate behaviour this year, everyone visiting the Shelter contributed to a generally peaceful atmosphere, enjoying each other's company and removing any remaining preconceptions and/or stigma surrounding homelessness.

This year during the registration process it became clear that whilst there was an increase in prospective *Guests*, the increase was not as high as expected.

The St John Ambulance - Hastings Homeless Service also noted in their Annual Report "a surprising reduction in rough sleeper contacts" and "undertook a needs assessment to explore reasons for the drop and identify ways to increase engagement with those who find themselves living on the streets. Service users and partner agency staff were consulted for their thoughts and observations".

Some of the reasons they identified for the reduced numbers included:

- Entrenched homelessness, whereby housing options had become increasingly limited, leading some rough sleepers to lose a sense of incentive for attending housing services such as those provided by agencies at the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Hub at Seaview and by Seaview itself;
- This disengagement was thought to be exacerbated by the provision on the streets - by a growing number of voluntary groups - of food, hot drinks, clothes, sleeping bags and tents, further disincentivising individuals from attending services where they could potentially access support towards longer-term solutions. One male rough sleeper with a severe mental health disorder, who had come to Hastings from another area, declined offers of reconnection to the local authority where he would be open to rehousing assistance, because he said he was being so well looked after on the streets of Hastings;
- Entrenchment tends to be associated with a vicious circle of deteriorating physical and/or mental health, and/or escalating substance use, and reduced motivation to seek or accept help".

In response to the needs assessment the St John Ambulance undertook a number of measures to increase their engagement with rough sleepers, one of which was:

"More proactive promotion of our service to Snowflake (winter night shelter) guests, through the use of bespoke flyers and ad hoc volunteer visits to the shelter".

b. Venue Coordinators

Each venue had a Venue Coordinator, usually from the community whose hall was being used.

The Venue Coordinator's responsibilities are principally the organisation of the cadre of volunteers to set up and run the Shelter that evening, the allocation of their duties, explanation of appropriate health & safety issues (including fire and emergency evacuation arrangements) and to ensure the *bona fides* of Guests arriving. The Morning Supervisor would normally organise the morning session for breakfast and for the packing up of the Shelter and the cleaning of the hall and its facilities.

Venue Coordinators were also instrumental in bringing Volunteers from different communities, different faith communities and those of no faith, together into effective teams for the benefit of the Guests. It is very appropriate to thank personally the Venue Coordinators, namely Ema Vessy (Monday), Kevin Swaffer (Tuesday), Peter Dann/Andrew Crighton (Wednesdays), Roy McGaughey (Thursdays), Janet Clarke (Fridays) and Chris Petts (Saturdays).

c. Volunteers

205 active volunteers were available this year. Significantly, younger volunteers came forward having been motivated by the Facebook page, a marvellous testimony to the care and willingness of good-hearted local people wishing to contribute to those less fortunate than themselves. That said, and perhaps understandably, availability of volunteers was heavily directed towards the more attractive evening shifts rather than overnight and mornings.

This year, Volunteers were asked to be more specific about their availability, and some offered to review the vacancies identified on the website and to offer to cover those gaps - most of the time this worked well, but there were still occasions when emergency arrangements had to be made to ensure appropriate levels of supervision.

Training facilities were provided in rooms at Sussex Coast College with no cost to the Trust, and 75 volunteers were trained by St John Ambulance trainers in respect of first aid and addiction, almost twice as many as in the previous year. On-line training in food safety (level 2) was offered, and two sessions on 'dealing with difficult situations' were held.

Volunteers bring their own skills, life experiences and interests to their contribution to the Shelter, and all have ensured a warm and welcoming environment for the Guests (and each other). Feedback from the Guests has been unfailingly positive and appreciative.

Guest comment "The volunteers are a varied and different kind of people always willing to help and go beyond to help you".

d. Staff

The success of the Shelter this year is due to the hard work and skills of Lesley Crighton, who took on the new role of Senior Project Supervisor, having been a volunteer. In her first year, she has shown real commitment and is forming excellent relationships with the various agencies/organisations that are vital in enabling Guests to move on in their lives - her relationship with the Guests has been particularly appropriate, professional and supportive, and many have benefited from her wise advice and encouragement. She has been ably supported by Biff Mooney, Assistant Project Supervisor.

The appointment of three Overnight Supervisors and two Morning Supervisors was a success in that fewer Volunteers were required to provide appropriate levels of overnight/morning supervision. This will be an area that Trustees will be looking at for winter 2018/2019.

Guest comment "I have never had a problem with any of the staff, if anything they have picked me up when I was feeling down"

e. Trustees

The Trustees overseeing the operation of the Shelter were: Andrew Crighton (Chair of Trustees), John Troughton (Deputy Chair of Trustees), John Reid (Secretary/Treasurer) Joseph Cornford-Hutchings, Peter Bourner, George Hornsby, Kevin Swaffer and Matthew Thomsett.

4. Financial Review

It is important that the way Snowflake spends its generously donated income is clearly and transparently explained.

This year, the Trust has been fortunate in obtaining a very substantial income from grant-making institutions (£21,000), from church and other community groups and organisations (£21,522), and £21,847 from private donations and fundraising, including contributions made via *Localgiving.com*. The continuing and very generous monthly contributions from a number of supporters is particularly helpful, and the many and various fundraising initiatives this year have been particularly inspiring, especially the annual 'wheelchair push' by Michael Hayward and Mike Richardson and the Revd Andrew Birch from St Luke's Church shaved off his ample beard! A Snowflake Team also took part in the Bexhill Santa Dash and is aiming to participate next year.

The trust's financial year ended on 31 May 2018. The annual accounts, having been examined by an independent retired chartered accountant free of charge, have been made available on the website. In summary, income and expenditure for the year is given below:

a. Income

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|
| From Grant-Making Trusts | £21,000 |
| From Church Communities | £8,670 |
| From Other Organisations | £12,852 |
| From Personal Donations & Localgiving.com | £20,847 |
| From Gift Aid & Bank Interest | £37 |
| TOTAL INCOME | £63,386 |

b. Expenditure

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Salaries, National Insurance & Pension Costs | £26,766 |
| Office Supplies, Leaflets, Volunteers' Handbooks, Fees etc | £1,117 |
| Website & IT | £1,195 |
| Office Rent to Seaview | £875 |
| Laundry, Bedding, Transport, Storage etc | £5,060 |
| Food | £4,551 |
| Insurance | £1,011 |
| Training | £1,272 |
| Other | £2,113 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | £43,960 |

The excess of income over expenditure for the year amounted to £19,426 (£14,646 in 2016/17), leaving Net Assets at 31 May 2018 of £60,216 (£40,789 at 31 May 2017), virtually all in cash. Whilst all reserves are held on an unrestricted basis, the opportunity has been taken prudently to transfer £10,000 to a van replacement reserve, and £10,000 to a general reserve. The Trustees therefore consider it appropriate that a 'going concern' basis of accounting be adopted. Regardless of the above, it is clear that to ensure the future of the Shelter, further fundraising will be required for the foreseeable future. All that said, the Trust is now better placed financially than at any time in its short history - with help on the way:

Guests comments *"I would like to say thank you very much, and when I get some spare money I will make a further donation" and "I am so so grateful for looking after me, give me lots of love im so appreciated for what Lesley and all the other volunteers were amazing, when I'm rich I will help you out"*

c. Hidden Costs

Churches provide their halls free of charge, also covering the utility and any extra insurance costs which might be levied. Some churches and individuals provided food and refreshments at their venues throughout the period, and one local restaurateur provided bacon for Saturday mornings - truly impressive contributions to the project.

Volunteers provided their services free of charge. Were they to be paid the living wage, then costs would increase by about £50,000 - this is a similar amount to what the trust would have to pay to hire the various Church halls were they not donated free of charge.

JM Waste Management generously provided wheelie bins at no cost to remove rubbish from the venues.

Offerfair Self Storage has generously allowed us to use one of their storage units at no cost.

Many individuals, communities and organisations donated much-needed toiletries, socks, scarves, hats and gloves which were very useful and well received by the Guests.

5. Feedback

a. From Guests

All Guests felt well cared for and safe and appreciated having a cooked meal in the evening. A few of Guests responses to our feedback questionnaire:

About Feeling Safe "very safe and happy to have somewhere warm to stay": "very safe, warm welcoming and friendly": "the kind and friendly staff did make me feel more secure": "very safe":

About Volunteers "very friendly, they are very warm and make you feel like a person again": "very friendly and helpful": "all kind and nice"; "they have all been brilliant".

About Food "food was more than adequate": "it was amazing every time": "the food is lovely - keep fresh fruit": "the food is a good standard".

b. From Volunteers

Feedback was received from about one quarter of Volunteers. Generally, Volunteers were unsure of what they had expected. However, in almost all responses, the following was clear:

- Volunteers felt the whole project was rewarding and enlightening, in some cases expressed as 'a privilege', certainly a better experience than had been anticipated
- Guests were found to be 'nice people' who just hadn't had the breaks or the support they needed - an immense groundswell of appreciation & thanks towards all Volunteers was evident from the Guests
- Preconceptions about homeless people were shattered - 'It certainly made me see things differently'
- Volunteers generally worked well together and felt well supported

So far as the Volunteers' opinions as to whether their impact on Guests had been beneficial to the Guests, the general opinion was that they hoped so. It was noted with pleasure that 24 Guests had been assisted to move into their own accommodation.

Volunteer comments "I think Hastings should be proud of Snowflake": "It was the most wonderful, most rewarding experience and made me wish I had started doing this years ago!": "As my first winter I have nothing to judge it against, but it seemed well run and the guests well cared for. I found it very worthwhile and humbling experience": "I really enjoyed working with staff and guests this year. Volunteering was a fantastic experience and I am proud to have been part of a group that is helping homeless people in the immediate and also the long term. Well done to organisers for arranging such excellent provision for the area!": "Overall, I think the Snowflake initiative is fantastic and I preface any criticism by acknowledging that fact. It literally saves lives and I really enjoy doing my tiny bit to help the cause".

6. Objectives

Including unresolved Objectives from earlier years:

- Improve continuing communication with Volunteers, especially over the Summer - **in hand**
- Employ appropriate levels of staff to ensure proper supervision and management of the shelter operation - **in hand**
- Revise the Volunteers' Handbook in the light of experience and any change in legislation, such changes also to be reflected in an updated website - **in hand**
- To continue to liaise and work well with other relevant agencies and to develop relationships with them further - **achieved** and **to be continued**
- To make Snowflake's services even better known - **achieved** and **to be continued**
- To consider the dates on which the Night Shelter will operate in light of experience of Snowflake and the other night shelters on the south coast and changing weather patterns - **achieved**
- To confirm the availability of venues and Venue Coordinators for winter 2018/19 - **in hand**
- To review our recruitment arrangements with a view to obtaining more Volunteers and their availability for the more unpopular shifts - **partially achieved**
- To maintain an appropriate level of financial reserves - **achieved** but **more work to be done**
- To build up the skills available to the Trustee Board by the appointment of more members, and to ensure key succession arrangements are in place - **partially achieved**

Appendix B - Grants from Trusts

Isabel Blackman Foundation

J A Carr Settlement (Druces & Attlee)

Magdalen & Lasher

Sussex Community Foundation

The Francis and Eric Ford Charity Trust

The Police & Crime Commissioner's *Safer in Sussex Fund*

The Silver Lady Fund

Appendix C - Donations from Organisations:

All Saints Church, Sidley
ASDA
Ashburnham and Penhurst WI
Ashburnham Chapel Carol Service
Battle Baptist Church
Battle Muffins
Conquest Hospital A&E Homeless Unit
Green Insurance
Friends of Vine Hall
Halton Baptist Church Friday Fellowship
Halton Dementia Group
Hastings and St Leonards Muffin Club
Hastings Catenians
Hastings Old Town Carnival Association
Hastings Old Town Christmas Raffle
Heringtons Solicitors
In Memoriam (3)
King's Church, Hastings
Knights of St Columba
Lions Club of Hastings
Little Common CP School
Mad Jacks Morris Dancers
Mount Pleasant Court
One-Stop, Sidley
PCC of St Helen's, Ore
Rye & Winchelsea Rotary Club
Sackville Road Methodist Women's Group
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
Section 5 Drummers, Hastings
St Barnabas, Bexhill
St Clare's Fraternity
St Ethelberga's
St Helen's Parish Church Carol Singers
St Helen & St Barnabas
St John the Evangelist
St Leonards Bridge Club
St Mary Star of the Sea
St Matthew's Scarecrows
St Matthew's Smarties
St Peter & St Paul
Sunday Night Live at Café Nero

Sussex Coast College
The Friends of 73A Centre
The Palace, Hastings and Resident DJ Mr Lee