

Sanctuary Winter Review: 2016/17

Headline Summary

Between December 2016 – March 2017:

- **170 Individual guests attended Sanctuary**
- **712 'sleeps on the street prevented**
- **1,813 hot meals served**
- **14,228 volunteer hours given**

General

This report covers the period 1st December 2016 to 30th March 2017 - our second year of operation as a Winter Cold Weather Night Shelter. As last year, we operated from one venue (Gravesend Methodist Church, Milton Road, Gravesend - GMC) on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, which are the times the venue is available to us.

Although the night shelter started in December 2017, we had been operating "Drop-In" sessions on Thursday and Sunday Nights for meals since the beginning of October, and providing a range of daytime activities throughout the year that included showers, laundry, and clothes bank to our guests.

Also new for this winter was the opening of the Sanctuary office on the first floor of GMC that was staffed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to support the daytime work done there.

As suspected, we have seen a big increase in the number of guests accessing Sanctuary Services both during the day and overnight. This was made more difficult by a shortfall in volunteers over last year but we are pleased to report that those volunteers we had did a great job and no one was turned away who came to us for help.

Volunteers

For this winter period we had 133 volunteers, some of which came in every week while others just once or twice a month. Most came from churches operating in the area under the Gravesend Churches Together banner, with the majority coming from City Praise Centre and Gravesend Methodist Church which are the main two churches involved. However, we are grateful for the support of other churches who commit to this worthwhile cause. We do accept volunteers who are not of the Christian faith, but all understand that this is a Christian project that we believe was initiated by God.

Over the winter period, our volunteers gave well over 14,000 hours in a selfless act of love to the homeless in our community.

Volunteer Training

For this year we followed up references for all our volunteers, who were also required to attend a volunteer training course where they were given a booklet that detailed their role. Similarly, Coordinators were given updated training session that included new forms and procedures based on our previous night shelter experience.

Volunteers who agreed to work in the kitchen were checked to ensure they had a Level 2 Food and Hygiene certificate.

New for this winter was the provision of Basic First Aid courses provided by the Red Cross at no charge for which we are most grateful their organiser Derek Cureso.

Finance

The rise in the number of guests substantially increased our running costs for the year. This required us to purchase extra kit bags for storing clothes, sleeping bags, sheets, pillows and of course in the provision of food. During the winter period, our costs for last year were £8,300 while for this year it was around £10,000, which excludes the generous gifts of clothing, food and supplies made by our volunteers and the general public.

The Statistics

The following statistics cover the 4 months of winter (December 2016 – March 2017). A full set of data for the year will be given at the end of June. (For reporting purposes, Sanctuary operates its year from July to June). A comparison with last winter is also shown:

Total No. of Guests:

Activity	This Year	Last Year	% Change
No. of Guests sleeping overnight	80	73	8.7%
No. of Guests just having a meal but not sleeping	41	12	70.7%
No. of Guests just accessing daytime services	49	22	55.1%
TOTAL NO.GUESTS ACCESSING SANCTUARY	170	107	37%
Total No. of sleeps prevented on the street	712	657	7.7%

Homelessness is a transitory problem and not everyone who accesses Sanctuary is a rough sleeper. The number of homeless people constantly changes but we would estimate that at any one time there are around 20-25 homeless people residing in Gravesend.

Ethnic Breakdown:

The guests who came to Sanctuary were originally from the following birth places:

- **EU = 39**
- **UK = 94**
- **Other = 50**

These figures are not 100% accurate, as there are some unknowns.

Sleeping Status:

The following shows the sleeping status of people when they first came into the shelter:

- **On the Street = 94**
- **Sofa Surfing = 23**
- **In a car = 10**
- **Renting = 18**
- **Unknown = 25**

Services accessed:

In terms of services used by our guests, we only recorded meals served last year, so for the other activities there are no comparative figures.

Activity	This Year	Last Year	% Change
No. of meals served	1813	1588	12.4%
No. of visits made across all activities	1100		
No. of showers taken	354		
No. of bags of clothing laundered	567		
No. of items of clothing issued	419		

Volunteer Hours:

Sanctuary would not be possible without the large number of hours given by our volunteers. For the winter period:

- Hours given by the Night Shelter teams: **13,422**
- Hours given by the Day time activity teams: **806**
- Total number of volunteer hours given during the winter period: **14,228**

Summary

This year has seen a big increase in the plight of people struggling to make ends meet and in particular trying to find a place to sleep. The guests we have dealt with this winter have come from a wide range of professions including a doctor and the banking sector.

The reasons for homelessness are varied and include:

- Family breakdown
- Loss of job
- Human trafficking
- Mental illness
- Lack of affordable housing
- Tenancy agreements ending
- Unwise life-style choices

The things that continues to strike us is that our guests really appreciate the fact that there are people who care about them. And it's not just those who volunteer at Sanctuary. We deal with many organisations who help us and our guests including Porchlight who have had great success in housing people and the House of Mercy who provide temporary accommodation. Without their help, the statistics shown would be much higher.

Thank you to all those who help and support us.

Stephen and Lorna Nolan

Sanctuary Project Managers.

31/03/2017.

About Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a project of City Praise Centre (Registered Charity No. 1160677 – www.citypraisecentre.com), working in partnership with Gravesend Methodist Church and Churches Together in Gravesham, whose objective is to support and befriend the homeless community, including those facing the prospect of homelessness and those re-entering accommodation. We do this by:

- Helping them to become part of a community
- Taking care and looking after their needs through direct help in providing:
 - A safe, place to sleep
 - Hot food and drinks
 - Showers
 - Clothing
 - Laundry
 - Help in getting paperwork ID
- Signposting them to agencies who can help with:
 - Accommodation
 - Employment
 - Physical and mental health
 - Repatriation to their home country
- Helping them take responsibility in making something of their life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We are a Christian organisation and as such believe that fullness in life is experienced when someone enters into a personal relationship with God. However, we do not believe in ramming home our beliefs and welcome anyone of any race or belief. It is through our actions and love for mankind that we demonstrate the lifestyle we would like others to adopt.

As with any project involving funds raised from the public, the project is run and managed according to a strict code of governance. Sanctuary has its own bank accounts and a steering group made up of people from a number of Gravesham Churches.

For more information visit our website at www.GraveshamSanctuary.uk or get in contact via the email: Sanctuary@citypraisecentre.com