



# Sanctuary

Helping the Homeless in Gravesham

**Annual  
Report  
2017-18**



# Sanctuary

## Sanctuary Annual Report 2017-18

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The report reviews the activities of Sanctuary during the period July 2017 – June 2018, and our findings, based on evidence collected, on the state of homelessness in Gravesham.

*July 2018*

*“... for I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me”  
Matthew 25 (NIV)*

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## 1. About Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a project of City Praise Centre (Registered Charity No. 1160677 – [www.citypraisecentre.com](http://www.citypraisecentre.com)), working in partnership with Gravesend Methodist Church and Churches Together in Gravesham. Our objective is to support and befriend the homeless community living in Gravesend.

Sanctuary operates throughout the year and offers services that include:

- ***Winter Night Shelter*** that provides showers, hot food and overnight sleeping arrangements. This operates on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday nights during December to March.
- ***Evening Drop-in Centre*** that provides hot food and a place for guests to meet in the evening. This team operates Sunday and Thursday evenings during April – June, October – November.
- ***Daytime Centre*** that operates weekly throughout the year providing hot showers, clothing, laundry and access to a pastoral team that deal with individual guest issues and links them with appropriate agencies.

Sanctuary works closely with other local agencies including Porchlight (housing charity), Mind (mental health), House of Mercy (temporary Hostel accommodation), CGL (drug and alcohol support), Job centre (employment opportunities), NHS services (health) and The Home Office (documents and repatriation to home country).

All this is only possible through the dedication of our volunteers who throughout the year gave over 6,600 hours to Sanctuary. For all other costs, Sanctuary relies totally on supporter contributions and the generosity of local businesses.

We do not attempt to solve the social and political issues regarding homelessness – our focus is on supporting adult individuals where ever we can.

All data reported in this review comes from our own records or recognised available sources.

## 2. Review of the year

As last year, our activities have been concerned with single homeless people. These are people who do not meet the priority need criteria in order to be housed by the local authority and are more likely to experience major health issues, both mentally and physically.

We keep detailed records of our guests with the aim of providing accurate information to those bodies responsible for relieving homelessness and to detect where our guests are being overlooked by public bodies or taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords/employers.

### *Those making use of Sanctuary*

Over the past season (2017/2018) Sanctuary has seen a slight fall in the number of "Guests" who use our services, compared with last year. There are several factors that contribute such as the new Housing Reduction Act which places new legal duties on local authorities and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) policy which provides overnight accommodation when the weather is bad.

	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
<b>Total No. accessing services:</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>218</b>

When asked where these people slept, we found:

No. sleeping on street:	97	80
No. sleeping in a car:	7	13
No. 'sofa surfing':	40	31

Throughout the year we provide a range of additional services to the homeless that helps in restoring some form of dignity and hope to those considered by the government as a low-priority need:

	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
No. Winter shelter sleeps (Dec-Mar):	609	712
No. hot meals served (Oct-Jun):	2272	2421
No. of hot showers provided:	638	793
No. of bags of laundry washed:	814	1154
No. of items of clothes provided:	841	1042
No. of sleeping bags issued	54	

Although we dealt with 189 individual guests during the past year, the figure is probably a lot higher as for some rough sleepers the prospect of sharing bed space with 11-20 other guests is too stressful.

## Homeless demographics

Homelessness is typically a transient problem, and so at any one time, the number and make up of our guests changes. In looking at the past year we found:

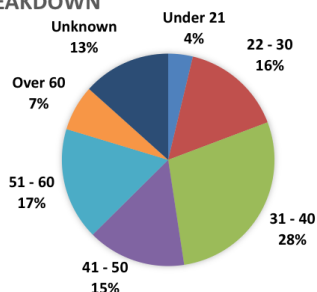
### Gender:

Male:	151
Female:	34
Unknown:	2

### Age breakdown:

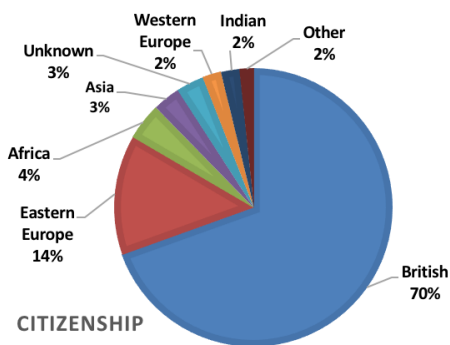
Under 21:	7
22 - 30:	29
31 - 40:	54
41 - 50:	28
51 - 60:	32
Over 60:	13
Unknown:	24

### AGE BREAKDOWN



### Citizenship:

British:	131
African:	8
Asian:	5
East Europe:	26
West Europe:	4
India:	4
Other:	3
Unknown:	6



British Citizenship now makes up 70% of the total guests, which is a high proportion. This makes no distinction between White or Black British, British Asian or Mixed. What is clear though, is that many more British are homeless this year and there are fewer from Europe compared to last year. Also of concern in the numbers are that 25% or more are over the age of 50.



## *Reasons for their homelessness*

In conversation with our guests, the following reasons were given as to why they became homeless:

- Losing a job and hence income to pay rent
- Unable to afford an increased rent within the area
- Evicted by landlord, sometimes without notice
- Landlord 'selling up' and no longer offering accommodation
- Domestic troubles within families
- Just been released from prison

## *Sanctuary – Making a real difference*

Through the efforts of Sanctuary, several guests have had their situations transformed.

As well as helping people with benefits, doctors' appointments and links with other agencies, positive outcomes were achieved through our direct involvement including:

No. of people housed:	17
No. of health issues (including mental health) resolved:	25
No. of people voluntary repatriated:	5
No of jobs found through our links with the Job Centre:	5

## **3. Volunteer Overview**

For this winter period we had around 170 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 over 6,600 hours in a selfless act of love to the homeless in our community. Out of interest, if we were able to pay

for the hours given at the National Minimum wage and National Living wage rates at £7.83p per hour for someone over the age of 25, the cost would amount to £51,973. This sum is for us as a church project, totally out of our reach and why we rely so heavily on our volunteers.

### *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 training manual that details their role. Similarly, Coordinators were given an 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 asked to ensure they had a Level 2 Food and Hygiene certificate.

We also provided Basic First Aid courses given by the Red Cross at no charge for which we are most grateful to their organiser Derek Cureso.

## **4. Corporate Sponsorship**

This year saw an increase in the number of organisations who directly supported the work of Sanctuary. These included:

Tesco – We receive weekly donations of food via their Fair Share programme

Asda – we received a community award of £200 through the green token challenge

Lidl - Donations through the neighbourly scheme of food products

Northfleet and Ebbsfleet Lions - Who provided a generous monetary donation

Gravesham Rotary Club - who supported the monies to create a new laundry facility at Gravesend Methodist Church for Sanctuary

In addition we are supported by many local churches including:

Winners Chapel, Dartford

Eastgate, Northfleet

City Praise Centre

Gravesend Methodist Church

## **5. Awards and Recognition**

- Our involvement with Gravesham Borough Council has been more effective this year as we now sit on various forums such as the local Gravesham Vulnerability Forum and G-safe Group.
- In May, Sanctuary received the Borough Community Award which recognised our volunteers for their civic duty to the homeless living in Gravesend.
- We worked alongside the council to develop and operate their Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). This plan offers temporary accommodation to the homeless through the worst winter months and was enacted 3 times. Our role involved contacting our guests and ensuring they were referred to the council for overnight housing.
- Sanctuary was featured on one of those evenings – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 - by Channel 5's programme The Big Freeze. In 'live' interviews we outlined the enormous task of supporting and challenging public perception of what homelessness is like. Our guests were also interviewed, resulting in increased public support for the work our volunteers do through this busy period.
- We were featured in a series of articles by the Kent Messenger newspaper on the work of Sanctuary and our project aims. This covered a different aspect of the project on a weekly basis from volunteering to pastoral care of our Guests.

## **6. Changes for Winter 2018/19**

As with every year, there are lessons to be learned and actions that we can take to improve the service we offer for both the sake of our guests and our volunteers. At the moment (July 2018) we are preparing for the next winter shelter and are planning to make the following changes:

## *Expanded Pastoral Support*

In the past we have relied on our coordinators (those who run a specified activity for the homeless) to deal with any guest issues. Although the Project Managers provide detailed notes on specific guest issues, the complexity and length of these notes make it impractical for them to act in appropriate ways should an issue arise. They also do not necessarily understand the current situation of a guest and what may cause them to become disruptive.

We have therefore established a Pastoral Team of 6 experienced volunteers who have the right skill sets and can provide this kind of assistance. During the daytime and evening sessions, a member of this team will be in attendance and, because of their knowledge of individual guests, will be able to step in and provide any support that may be necessary. It also provides the guests with a familiar face who they know, and someone who understands their particular circumstances, who can also liaise with the appropriate external bodies to resolve any problems they may be experiencing.

## *Employment of key roles*

Sanctuary has become an important part of Gravesend's response to the homeless living here. If, for any reason, we are unable to provide these services, untold hardship will result among the most vulnerable in our society.

There were a number of occasions over winter when Sanctuary came close to being closed, due to a lack of administration resources. So far, all our work has been performed by volunteers – i.e. no one receives any kind of payment for what they do. By law, we cannot put any kind of pressure onto a volunteer to perform an action within a set time, as this is then deemed to be employed position.

With this in mind and for the long-term future of Sanctuary, the steering group agreed to employing people for the following positions:

**Project Manager** – responsible for the smooth running of Sanctuary and that it operates within its governance structure

**Volunteer Administrator** – responsible for the recruitment, training and suitability of volunteers. They will also administer the rota of teams and to ensure any 'gaps' are filled.

Currently, both roles will be managed by City Praise Centre as Sanctuary is a part of this organisation's governance framework.

### *Support for Campaign Kent*

During the year we were introduced to **CampaignKent**, who collect information regarding the homeless and then present their findings to agencies responsible for tackling homelessness.

They have an on-line database that will replace our current system of collecting details of guests. It is believed that this will result in much better information on individual guests as well as improve our understanding of trends and the causes of homelessness.

More information on this group can be found at: [www.campaignkent.co.uk](http://www.campaignkent.co.uk)

### *Set volunteer teams*

Although we attract a large number of volunteers each year, around 80% all want to do the same shift. This means that sessions such as overnight have hardly any volunteers and are in danger of us having to close the shelter.

For this year we will be recruiting volunteers into specific teams that are each aligned to a specific session. Once that team is 'full' potential volunteers will be directed to teams that have low numbers. In this way we will be able to direct our marketing for volunteers and ensure that those who do volunteer, will have more opportunities to serve.

## **7. Sanctuary Vision**

Since its inception in 2015, Sanctuary has dealt with 504 Individual Guest and prevented 1,978 sleeps on the streets in the borough. Although we are not a statutory agency we nevertheless have well trained volunteers and have gained a wealth of experience in dealing with the homeless.

We provide data on the extent of homelessness in the borough, including the street count of homeless people, which we do in conjunction with Porchlight. We also work with the police and statutory agencies like the National Health Services (NHS) so health care and other issues can be resolved without prejudice.

Our vision for the development of Sanctuary includes:

- Getting more churches involved in providing additional overnight winter shelter

- the provision of temporary accommodation for selected guests while working with them to provide more permanent accommodation
- Operating drop-in and counselling services 7 days/week
- Expanding the number of people employed
- Securing more long-term funding

## **8. Supporting Sanctuary**

We estimate that the cost of running Sanctuary, assuming that all our volunteer costs were employed positions, would be in the region of £50,000. As it is, our volunteers are generous with their time and we receive office, kitchen, sleeping and community space at no cost from Gravesend Methodist Church and City Praise Centre. We have also received gifts of food and clothing which greatly reduce the items we need to purchase, but even with these the running costs in cash spent amounted to over £17,500 for the past year.

This coming year (July 2018 – June 2019) will see these costs increase dramatically as we employ people for the first time. Our projected expenditure is over £34,000. We have reserves that will cover some of these costs, but we need to secure regular donations to stay afloat and even more if we are to see our vision come to reality.

We are looking for individuals, churches, and local businesses to support us financially on a regular basis. They can do this by setting up a standing order to:

**Account Name: CPC Sanctuary**

**Account No.: 00028641**

**Sort Code: 40-52-40**

For individuals who are tax payers, please let us know so we can claim Gift Aid on your behalf.

We can also receive cheques made payable to 'CPC Sanctuary' sent to our postal address shown on the back cover of this booklet.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers who can help us, particularly when the shelter is running overnight. For more details and applications, visit:

**[www.graveshamsanctuary.uk/get-involved/application](http://www.graveshamsanctuary.uk/get-involved/application)**

## **9. Conclusions**

To date Sanctuary has supported 189 individual guests who, without the help and care from Sanctuary, would have endured another night sleeping rough. This is only possible through the efforts of our volunteers who go above and beyond the normal remit of caring for our guests. Therefore, we have seen lives changed and people placed back in employment, who live active healthier lifestyles than before.

Whilst we remember those who have died on the street we celebrate those guests who lives have been changed. We also give thanks for our volunteers who are trained to serve in this way have aided and listened to many sad stories of broken relationships, compromised situations and dysfunctional early childhoods.

Sanctuary above all is grateful to our corporate supporters who recognise the deprived state of those who live on our local streets, who without fail provide food and other items such as sleeping bags, blankets, clothing and toiletries than enable us to provide the showers, laundry facilities and endless cups of tea and coffee plus toast and biscuits.

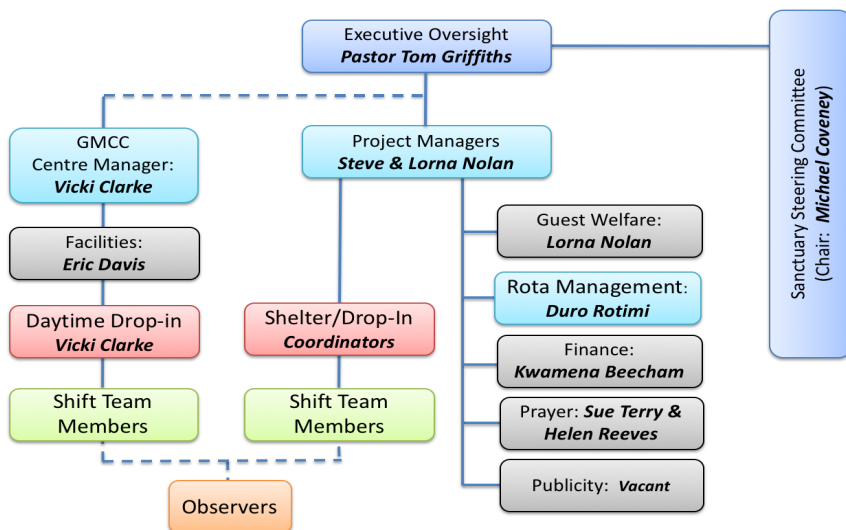
To summarise, Sanctuary has provided shelter, fed those who are hungry, encouraged and supported those seeking a better lifestyle and sought out housing suitable for the needs of those who are facing life on the streets.

### **The Homeless Grace**

As we give thanks for our daily bread  
And our sound night's sleep in a comfortable bed,  
Let us think of others with little to eat  
And nowhere called home to rest their feet.

## APPENDIX I: Sanctuary Governance Structure

Like any well run charitable activity, we have a governance structure under which we operate, that is fully compliant with the regulations laid down by the Charity Commission.



Pastor Tom Griffiths has executive oversight, keeping local church ministers informed and gaining support of the local council and our MP.

The day-to-day running of the project is the responsibility of the Project Managers (Steve and Lorna Nolan) who are directly accountable to the Executive Oversight, and the Gravesend Methodist Church Centre Manager, Vicki Clarke.

Beneath them are several departments that are responsible for the different activities within the Shelter. This is split between the drop-in evening and overnight activities and the daytime activities that take place at Gravesend Methodist church during the day.

The Steering Group has responsibility for the smooth delivery of this project and represent the various churches involved. A full copy of our governance can be obtained on request or from the Sanctuary website.



## **APPENDIX II: Sanctuary Financial Results**

Sanctuary is not funded by a statutory source but relies heavily on voluntary donations from local churches and individuals. This enables us to continue to provide services that are community based and dedicated to the individual guest.

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>
Donations:	£23,230	£35,827
Expenditure:		
Administration (Telephone, printing, etc)	£2073	£2,071
Promotion (leaflets, banners, etc)	£969	£309
Supplies (sleeping bags, sheets, etc)	£2,260	£2,758
Catering	£2,784	£3,280
Premises related (additional heat, light, etc)	£5,741	£3,630
Volunteer expenses (petrol, etc)	£1,259	£1,065
Other	£2,549	£537
Total Expenditure:	<u>£17,635</u>	<u>£13,650</u>

For accounting purposes, Sanctuary runs from July to June the following year. Hence FY2017 covers July 2016 to June 2017, while FY2018 covers July 2017 to June 2018.

Only financial gifts are included. We had a large number of donations of clothing, food and goods that were used but not recorded here.

At the current time Sanctuary has a bank balance of £24,163 which is planned to be used on employing a Volunteer Administrator and a Project Manager.

## APPENDIX III: Homelessness in Britain in 2018.

### *The Homeless Crisis*

New evidence from various charities such as Shelter, and Crisis show that homelessness remains a persistent problem in the UK. They record a rise of 4% since 2016 and show that many households are stuck in temporary accommodation, where one in three will remain by next Christmas.

Rough sleeping is the most visible manifestation which many people consider to be the meaning of homelessness. The legal definition, however, is broader and captures the experience of many homeless families and individuals who are hidden out of sight but without a home or the certainty of knowing where they will be sleeping overnight.

Legally, someone is homeless if they do not have a right to occupy accommodation, or, if the accommodation is of such poor quality that they cannot reasonably be expected to stay there. This definition dates to the Landmark Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and applies to England, Scotland and Wales.

Current definitions of homelessness in England (Housing Act 1996, S 175)

1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he-

a) is entitled to occupy by an interest in it or by an order of a court.

b) has an express or implied license to occupy or

c) occupies as a residence by any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation

Or restrict the right of another person to recover possession.

2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but -

a) he cannot secure entry to it, or

b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted to place it and to reside in it.

3) a person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which would be reasonable for him to occupy.

As recent as November 2017, Shelter estimated that there are 307,000 people recorded as homeless in Britain.

This includes those identified as rough sleepers, single people in hostels, households owed a statutory homeless duty by a local authority, and homeless households being accommodated by social services.

But this is a conservative estimate, due to assumptions about household size, assumptions about how hostel beds are occupied, flaws with rough sleeping count and a partial response by local authorities. In addition, there are further households who are legally homeless who have not been recorded by authorities. Many of these are sofa surfing with friends or family members.

Research conducted by Homeless Link suggests that 14% of the population have experienced homelessness themselves including sofa surfing at some point. 20% knew someone else who had experienced it, 2% said they had both experienced it and knew others who had.

Therefore, across the population, it would mean that at least one in 200 people are currently homeless. This places a considerable burden on the local authority who have a duty to rehouse homeless households who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

The number of statutory homeless households in temporary accommodation waiting for a permanent home has increased by 43% in the past seven years. For many households temporary accommodation is far from ideal with many still living there a year later.

There is now consensus that England is in the grip of a housing crisis. One consequence of this is the recent rise in homelessness. Local authorities record the reason as the loss of private tenancy which has soared since cuts to housing benefit began in 2011.

The National Audit Office completed its own investigation into the rise in homelessness and concluded that the rise and affordability in the private rental sector is "likely to have contributed to the increase in homelessness".

Affordability has been directly affected by successive reforms to Local Housing Allowance.

## *Homelessness Reduction Act*

From April 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act in England introduced legislation to ensure that many more people have a right to local authority assistance to help relieve or prevent homelessness.

This provides an opportunity to reduce the number of homeless people but as good as the intention is, we believe will fall short in tackling the root causes of homelessness.

Polly Neate, CEO of the housing charity SHELTER, stated on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017 that 300,000 people in Britain are waking up homeless. Some will have spent the night shivering on a cold pavement, others crammed into a dingy hostel room with many simply unaccounted for. Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this is clearly unacceptable and relates to poverty and human degradation.

## *Availability and use of homelessness services*

### **Key headlines:**

- There are 1,185 accommodation projects in England a decrease of 5% on last year 2016/2017.
- There is a total of 35,727 bed spaces in these accommodation projects a decrease of 2% on last year
- There are 214-day centres in England an increase of 3% on the previous year.
- The majority of residents in homeless accommodation projects were male (72%) a substantial proportion were young people (45%) and one in ten (9%) were EEA migrants.
- People in accommodation projects have a wide range of needs including complex needs (33%) mental health (32%) and drug use (31%).
- Reasons for turning people away included projects being full and oversubscribed (66%), and because the individual needs were too complex.

### **Accommodation Projects:**

These consist of short and long-term accommodation such as 6 month, via local authority or a no second night out (NSNO) whereas others accept self-referrals. The type of accommodation is delivered in a variety of forms including single rooms with shared facilities (HMO) and bedsit flats for when people leave accommodation. This does not

include night shelters or specialist accommodation for people with substance use, mental health and/or offending needs.

### **Day Centres:**

These offer non- accommodation-based support for people who sleep rough, individuals experiencing other forms of homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. They often differ widely, shaped by their history, local needs and funding, but tend to have an element of open access combined with structured support.

Some offer a wide range of advice, training and activities as well as providing access to specialist support such as healthcare or housing.

### **Sanctuary Provision**

In Kent we face a limited number of bed spaces and day centres that function all through the year, plus projects that are for winter shelter use. Sanctuary is often referred to as another emergency service as we provide all three but have limited nights available during the coldest months of the year.

We provide mixed gender beds with 18 places available on any one night but have housed up to 22 in the extreme weather that this winter has seen with many one night only situations.

### *Summary*

A glimpse of who is homeless showed that the vast majority of our guests are single men with no fixed address who have either been released from prison or have left the family home.

Another category is those that have left hospital from either a long-term illness such as tuberculosis or other street diseases. Many of our guests have had mental health issues associated with street life, drug or substance misuse, and alcohol.

Some have been irregular or undocumented migrants with no recourse to public funds brought to Britain for work purposes or exploitation in a low economy workforce such as fruit picking and farm labour, cleaning or low paid menial tasks.

Many of our guests are refused access under stringent referral criteria that determines who can be accepted into a range of services. Local authorities only

accept proven local connections or by other controls which only takes in guests who are not offenders or pose a risk to the accommodation such as drug abuse.

If a guest needs were deemed to be too high or a guest was assessed as a risk to others they were equally declined access. Other concerns were not enough staff resources and insufficient staff training.



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Gravesend  
**Methodist Church** 

**In Partnership with Churches Together in Gravesham**