



Sanctuary Annual Report



2018 - 2019

Sanctuary

Sanctuary Annual Report 2018-19

The report reviews the activities of Sanctuary during the period July 2018 – June 2019, and our findings, based on evidence collected on the plight of homelessness in Gravesham.

July 2019

***“... 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

Our objective is to support and befriend the homeless community living in Gravesend. We do this by acting as a first point of contact to provide for immediate needs where we can, and to then point them to the relevant agencies who can help with their individual situations.

All this is only possible through the dedication of our volunteers who throughout the year gave over 15,000 hours. For all other costs, Sanctuary relies totally on supporter contributions and the generosity of local businesses.

During the past year, Gravesham Sanctuary became an independent charity, (registered in England & Wales No. 1181817) with its own board of trustees. Sanctuary remains a project of City Praise Centre which has its registered address at The Maltings, 11 Lower Higham Road, Gravesend DA12 2LY, who also provide us with office space.

Gravesham Sanctuary works in close partnership with various local agencies to help reduce the number of rough sleepers in the Gravesham area. These include Gravesham Borough Council, Porchlight (housing charity), Mind (mental health), House of Mercy (temporary hostel accommodation), CGL (drug and alcohol support), Gravesend Job Centre (employment opportunities), NHS Services (health) and The Home Office (documents and repatriation to a home country).

At the start of 2019, Gravesham Borough Council offered us the use of an unused Community Hall at Longferry Court for overnight sleeping. This has proved to be a great venue that greatly reduces the setting up and breaking down effort required in the past.

We also work in partnership with Gravesend Methodist Church who provided the sleeping venue up until early 2019, and the evening drop-in sessions that we conduct between November – June. They run a daytime hub that many of the homeless visit, where they can get their clothes laundered, take a shower and speak to various agencies who can help them.

For 2019-20 we plan to make a number of changes including:

- Provision of a Night Shelter that offers showers, hot food and overnight sleeping arrangements between the months of October – April, 7 days a week. This is dependent on finding sufficient volunteers and financial resources but at the current time we are confident that this can be achieved. It does mean that we may not be able to run the evening

drop-in sessions so that volunteer effort can be focused on the night shelter.

- Being part of the Councils Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) where we will provide beds for those rough sleeping in temperatures at zero degrees or below.
- Vetting guests that attend Sanctuary to ensure they are seeking help and are in need of the services we provide.

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. They 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

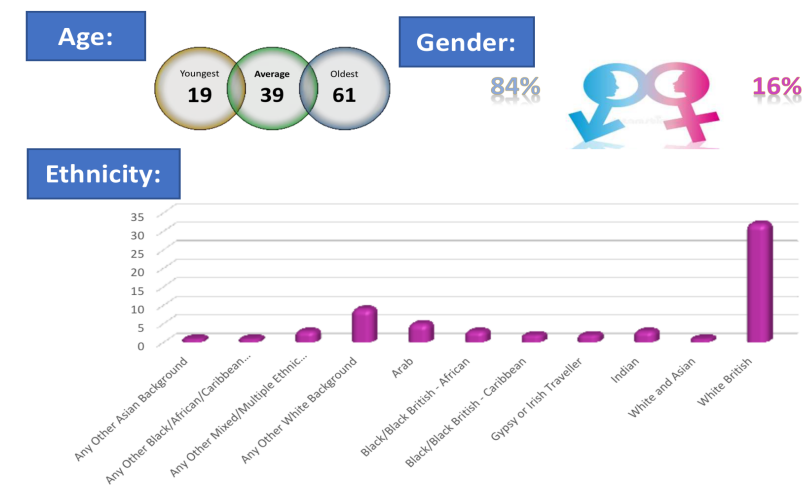
Over the past season (2018/2019) Sanctuary has seen a 41.2% increase in the number of "Guests" who use our services, compared with last year. However those making use of the sleeping arrangements are down, which could be due to several factors such as the new Housing Reduction Act which places legal duties on local authorities, and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) policy that provides overnight accommodation when the weather is forecast to be life-threatening to rough sleepers.

We have had significant success this year in working with our partner agencies where a fair number of guests have been able to find accommodation, temporary or otherwise. But this has been offset by the huge increase of 127.5% in those accessing meals during the evening drop in sessions compared to last year.

	2017/18	2018/19	Growth
Total Number accessing services	194	274	+41.2%
Sleeps prevented on the street	609	394	-35.3%
Individual guest sleeping at Sanctuary	78	67	-14.1%
Individual guest meals at Sanctuary	40	91	+127.5%
Individual Daytime Only Guest	42	55	+31%
Night Total Sleep & meal guest	118	158	+33.9%
Drop In Evenings Only	34	60	+76.5%
Total Meals served	2283	2545	+11.5%

Homeless demographics

Here are some of the other statistics produced by our recording system:



Health:

Guests with an Offending History

37%

Unsure: 10%

Guests with diagnosed Mental Health Issues

55%

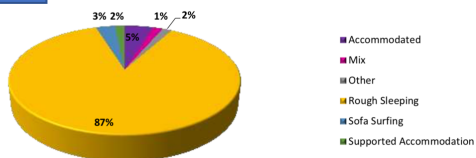
13% of guests have been discharged from hospital to street homelessness

Guests with Physical Health Conditions

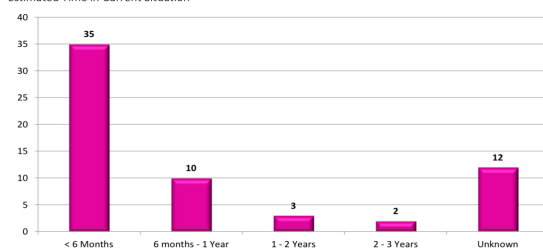
44%

11% Unrecorded

Housing:



Estimated Time in Current Situation



Reasons for their homelessness

- Relatives/friends unable/unwilling to house
- Domestic violence
- LA possession action
- Housing association possession action
- Private Accommodation Rent Arrears
- Delays in HB claims
- Anti-social behaviour
- Hospital Discharge to Street Homelessness
- Relationship breakdown (excluding divorce)
- Harassment/illegal eviction
- LA Rent Arrears
- Private landlord possession action
- Unable to afford rent in PR Accommodation
- LA won't re-house permanently
- Prison Release to Street Homelessness
- Evicted from Supported Accommodation

You can access the full report produced by Campaign Kent from our website at

www.graveshamsanctuary.uk/reports/

3. Volunteer Overview

For the past winter period we had around 150 volunteers, some of whom served every week while others just once or twice a month. Most came from churches operating in the area under the banner of Gravesham Churches Together, with the majority coming from City Praise Centre. We are grateful for the support of all the churches who commit to this worthwhile mission.

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 15,036 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 £8.21p per hour for someone over the age of 25, the cost would amount to over £120,000.

Volunteer Training

As last year, all volunteers were required to attend a training course where they were given a Volunteer Manual that detailed 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 required to have a Level 2 Food and Hygiene certificate. They also had their own training sessions on the hygiene standards we insist on at Sanctuary. During the year, the Sanctuary kitchen team received the top rating of 5 stars from the local health inspectors.

4. Corporate Sponsorship

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

Tesco – We receive weekly donations of food via their Fare Share program.

John Lewis Partnership who supported us financially and with the ingredients for our Christmas dinner.

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 facilities at Sanctuary.

United Living who generously donated provisions and finance

In addition we are supported by many local churches including:

Eastgate, Northfleet

City Praise Centre

Gravesend Methodist Church

And many smaller congregations

5. Changes for Winter 2019/20

As with every year, there are lessons to be learned and actions that we can take to improve the service we offer to our guests and volunteers. At the moment [July 2019] we are preparing for the next winter shelter where we are planning the following significant changes:

Focus on Rough Sleepers

Sanctuary, now an Independent charity with its own governance and trustee board, will focus on providing an Overnight Winter Shelter based at Longferry Court. Within the shelter we plan to offer meals and showers, which returns us back to our original response to the homeless on the street.

We will continue to partner with Gravesend Methodist Church, although it does not come under the banner of Sanctuary as they are two different organisations with different governance structures. The Methodist Church have made a great success of the Daytime Homeless Hub run by their centre manager Vicki Clarke and so it makes sense to maintain our link as many of our guests use both the Daytime Hub and the Overnight Shelter.

New Partnerships

As a result of a number of meetings with Gravesham Borough Council we will be working more closely with the council to try and reduce the numbers of rough sleepers within the Borough. This is as a result of initiatives by local and national government that have released some grant funding to pay for outreach workers

and the possible employment of an overnight coordinator for the night shelter. This means there is an onus on us to open over a period of six months, from late October through to end of April for seven nights a week providing we can find sufficient volunteers to cover all our shift patterns.

At the time of writing we are in discussion with a number of local churches within Gravesham Churches Together, who we hope will adopt a night at Longferry Court making it their own evening to run. If successful, this would help us to achieve opening the seven nights a week requested by the council.

New Venue Upgrades

The community hall at Longferry Court requires a number of modifications to make it a better place for the Night Shelter. This includes the installation of blinds, a new kitchen, showers, washing facilities and providing a sleeping area for our volunteers. It could also do with being completely re-decorated.

We have a few promises of help but will be seeking more sponsors so we can get this work completed before the start of the winter season.

Expanded Pastoral Support

We now have an established Pastoral Team of 5 experienced volunteers who have the skills to provide assistance and understanding of specific guest issues. This proved essential during last winter where guest issues can cause problems and unrest for all users of the shelter.

To support the Pastoral Team we have created a team of people who can interview and register guests who are suitable for the overnight shelter during daytime sessions at Longferry Court.

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 can result among the most vulnerable in our society.

There were a number of occasions over the past winter where Sanctuary came close to being closed, due to a lack of administration and coordinator resources. So far, much of our work is performed by volunteers, for which we are most grateful – i.e. no one receives any kind of payment for what they do.

With this in mind and for the long-term future of Sanctuary, the trustees have agreed to employ 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 ensure that any ‘gaps’ are filled.

Overnight Coordinator/Building Manager – This position is new and will be funded in its first year by a grant from local council via national government, which will be reviewed next year.

Support for Campaign Kent

During the year we were introduced to **Campaign Kent**, who collect information regarding the homeless and then present their findings to agencies responsible for tackling homelessness. They have now produced their first reports which gives an excellent overview on the homeless problem we face in Gravesend.

More information on this organisation can be found at:

www.campaignkent.co.uk

6. Sanctuary Vision

Since its inception in 2015, Sanctuary has dealt with 793 individual guests, many of whom were homeless or facing homelessness, and prevented 2,372 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 Gravesham Borough Council and Porchlight. We also work with the police and statutory agencies such as the National Health Services (NHS), so health care and other issues can be resolved without prejudice.

Our vision remains the same as last year for the development of Sanctuary and includes:

- Getting more churches involved in providing additional overnight winter shelter. We hope to achieve some of this in the coming year.
- 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

7. Supporting Sanctuary

Sanctuary is predominantly a volunteer organisation, where a large number of people give their time to the project for no charge. Where we do have costs, it is in the provision of resources to help the homeless and in paying key staff to ensure the project is managed and continues to run well.

We are fortunate that we also receive many gifts such as food and clothing which greatly reduce the items we need to purchase, but even with these the cash requirements of running Sanctuary amounted to £33,729 for the past year.

This coming year (July 2019 – June 2020) these costs will continue to rise as we employ people for vital, specific roles. We have some reserves but need to secure regular donations to stay open, 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 directly or by setting up a regular standing order using the following details:

Account Name: Gravesham Sanctuary CIO

Account No.: 00032523

Sort Code: 40-52-40

We have two new options for giving on line:

- You can donate through our Facebook page at:
www.facebook.com/graveshamsanctuary/
- or create a fundraising page to share with friends and colleagues at:
www.wonderful.org/charity/graveshamsanctuarycio

We also receive cheques made payable to 'Gravesham Sanctuary CIO' which can be sent to our registered address shown on the cover of this report.

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

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/volunteer

Conclusions

To date Sanctuary has supported 793 individual guests, many of whom, without the help and care from Sanctuary, would have endured nights 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. As a result, we have seen lives changed and people placed back in housing and employment, who live more active, healthier lifestyles than before.

Whilst we remember those who have died on the street we celebrate those guests who lives have been changed and give thanks that our teams of volunteers who are trained to serve in this way have supported them 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 recognize the desperate situation of those who live on our local streets and without fail provide food and other items such as sleeping bags, blankets, clothing and toiletries that enable us to provide the showers, laundry facilities and endless cups of tea and coffee along with toast and biscuits.

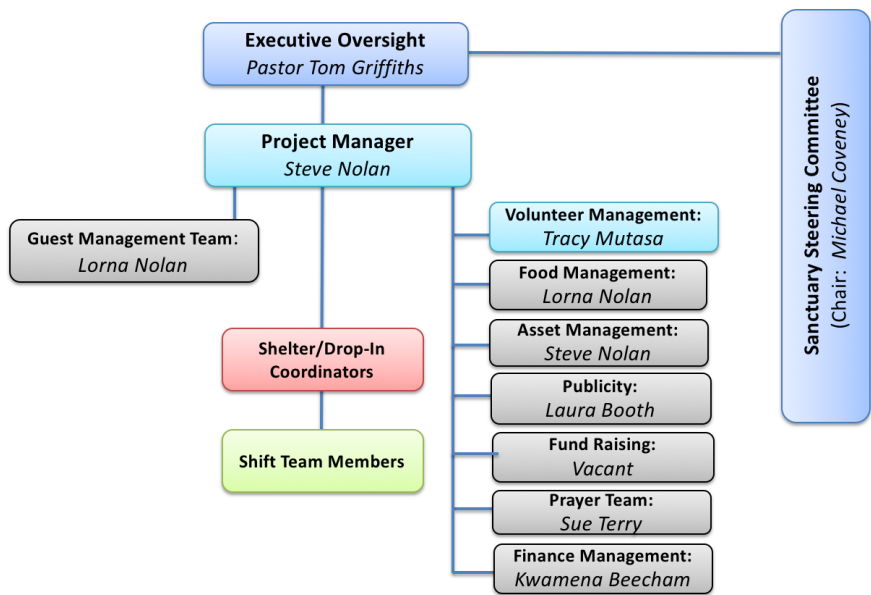
To summarise Sanctuary has provided shelter, fed those who are hungry, encouraged and supported those seeking a better lifestyle and sought out housing suitable for the needs of those who are facing life on the streets.

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.

Beneath them are several departments that are responsible for the different activities within the Shelter and its administration.

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 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 2019</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>
Donations:	£26,509	£35,827

Expenditure:

Administration (Telephone, printing, etc)	£2,667	£2,071
Insurance	£687	-
Promotion (leaflets, banners, etc)	£342	£309
Supplies (sleeping bags, sheets, etc)	£5,402	£2,758
Catering	£1,981	£3,280
Premises related (additional heat, light, etc)	£2,006	£3,630
Staffing	£18,866	-
Volunteer expenses (petrol, etc)	£328	£1,065
Other	£1,450	£537
Total Expenditure:	£33,729	£13,650
Surplus/Deficit	-£7220	

For reporting purposes, the above accounts are from July to June the following year. Hence FY2018 covers July 2017 to June 2018, while FY2019 covers July 2018 to June 2019.

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 £16,896 which is planned to be used on employing an Overnight Coordinator. Our estimated budget for 2019-20 is around £50,000, and so we need to raise even more funds.

APPENDIX III: Homelessness in Britain in 2019

A review by Lorna Nolan, Sanctuary Project Manager

Who are the homeless?

One of the challenges we face when dealing with the homeless, is trying to determine exactly who they are. There are many 'Hidden Homeless' - people whose situation is not visible such as those sleeping in cars, tents, squatting, and occupying non-residential buildings, that the authorities know nothing about. These people are absent in the official statistics.

Even for those who do have a place to stay, their situation is often anything but permanent. Many are in accommodation that is unsuitable and/or temporary [e.g. those staying in Bed & Breakfast, those "sofa-surfing", i.e. staying with friends on a short-term basis, and those staying in overcrowded hostels.] To our mind, these are people without a place they can call home

Homelessness on the increase

The overall level of core homelessness in England (the number counted on a typical night) has risen from 120,000 in 2010 to 153,000 in 2017, an increase of 28%. In the case of Sanctuary the number of people we have dealt with to date since September 2018 is 274 registered guests, many with a local connection to Gravesend.

The fastest-growing component of those we call homeless are those placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (260% increase). This is a reflection of the growing pressure placed on local authorities as increased demand for accommodation has met a static or falling supply of social lettings. This is probably the reason why the largest category of core homelessness are those sofa surfing, which has grown by 26%.

So why the increase in numbers?

Universal credit is a major issue due to the seemingly erratic nature of delays in getting the benefit, compounded by widespread system errors, which in some cases is causing destitution.

The safety net once provided by Housing Benefit, whereby post housing incomes were protected from erosion below basic benefit levels, has now effectively ended for the bulk of private tenants in receipt of benefit, with young people under 35 particularly badly affected by reduced Local Housing Allowance rates and the working age benefit freeze.

Nearly two thirds of local authorities anticipate a “significant” increase in homelessness as a result of the full roll-out of Universal Credit. Around half of local authorities likewise expect that the freeze in Local Housing Allowance rates and other working age benefits, and the lowered benefit cap, will significantly increase homelessness in their areas.

Another significant impact has been the introduction of the local welfare award (LWA) introduced this April 2019 where the Local authority can provide rent in advance, tackle smaller rent arrears, offer food vouchers and one-off payments. However, the short-term nature along with its higher costs meant that arrears were inevitable and unsustainable for both provider and tenant.

Short Term Tenancy

As our guests enter into temporary accommodation, some feel that a place to call home is not too far away. However, we have seen some guests after a 6 months tenancy, finding themselves back rough sleeping on the streets as the tenancy agreement ends due to various factors such as underpayment of rent, sanctions of universal credit or other benefits. This is often a reflection of the lack of skills they have to handle money.

We continue to do what we can to assist and support our guests through transitions to housing, work and other sustainable opportunities promoting their well-being and change of lifestyle for a better future.



c/o The Maltings

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