

BEXLEY WINTER SHELTER

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MAY 2022

Charity Details

Bexley Winter Shelter
c/o New Community Church S E London
24 Station Road
Sidcup, Kent
DA15 7DU

Charity number: 1184243

Trustees

Charles Edward January (Chair)
Sean Anthony Knights (Treasurer)
Ursula Jean Ayliffe
Rev James Richard Charles
Rev Edward Rhys Barlow
Rev Melanie Jemmett

Activities and objectives

The Bexley Winter Shelter (BWS) is a project run by Bexley churches to help those experiencing homelessness with a connection to the London Borough of Bexley (and sometimes beyond). Set up to provide support during the coldest and most difficult time of the year, the shelter normally runs from January to March each year.

In an almost repeat of the 2021 season, with a further grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Homeless Winter Transformation Fund 2021-2022, our guests were accommodated in self-contained rooms at two establishments in Bexleyheath, Kent. The easing of Covid-19 regulations, however, meant that we could return back to providing communal eating. At a different venue each night, we were able to provide an evening meal where the guest could socialise, be welcomed by our volunteers and meet with our Guest Case Worker.

BWS is not an open shelter, people cannot simply turn-up and expect to be provided with accommodation and help. With the help of the new grant, we were still able to engage the services of a Guest Case Worker (GCW). They provided the assessment, support, move-on and after care support that our guests had experienced previously.

As usual, the view going into the season was to provide a holistic, loving approach to our guests to enable them to be empowered and experience God's presence and love. God's presence was strong and visible through His work this season. While there were many challenges this time, BWS saw growth and has laid strong foundations for continued development going forward.

Community Code

All guests at the shelter are required to sign-up to our Community Code, which outlines a joint standard of behaviour. Alcohol, drugs and weapons are not permitted on any of the premises and guests may be refused entry if they arrive drunk and unable to sober up or if they are under the

Although the Covid regulations were now eased, it was still considered unwise to return to the rotating dormitory style operation (where guests slept in a different church hall each evening). Further funding from MHCLG was applied for and obtained. We looked (and are still looking) into Hope into Action, pods, utilising an empty local authority property and hotel/B & B accommodation. As previously, all options slowly ground to a halt apart from the use of hotel/B & B accommodation. The MHCLG Homeless Winter Transformation Fund 2021-2022 grant provided BWS with sufficient funding to provide hotel/B & B accommodation for up to ten guests at a time, to engage the services of a Guest Case Worker for another year, operate in a COVID-19 secure way, provide move-on help and assist in finding long-term accommodation for homeless men and women.

Unfortunately, our Guest Case Worker from 2020/21 left but we were able to recruit a replacement. The new Guest Case Worker started on 1st December 2021 and the launch of 2022 Season started on 6th January 2022. Weekly Wednesday meetings were scheduled for the season between BWS and London Borough of Bexley (LBB) to discuss referrals, guests, and process. Thames Reach, Housing Justice (HJ) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) were also involved. These allowed us to address concerns and flag situations early. These meetings continued until the end of April 2022.

The week leading up to the 6th January was used to secure Self-Contained rooms for guests at B & Bs in Bexleyheath, refining the referral process with Thames Reach and LBB, and producing and finalising the Referral Pack and New Guest Assessment Packs for BWS. Everything was finished and confirmed the evening of 5th January for the 6th January launch.

Community Involvement

During the Covid regulations, community involvement was very limited. With the removal of such regulations BWS considered again the provision of an evening meal. The purpose being community, friendship, ownership and relationship. We aimed to provide evening meals each night of the week. We approached our volunteer base and the local churches. In the end we had four venues, all in Bexleyheath, covering Monday to Friday with one on standby for Saturday. Our thanks go to Bexley Christian Life Centre, Trinity Baptist, The Boys Brigade Hall, St John Vianney and the URC Geddes Place. The provision of the evening meal was staffed purely by volunteers from churches in Bexley as well as others from the local community. This witnessed to the truly ecumenical and community character of Bexley Winter Shelter.

The number of churches involved was around 33 churches whilst the number of volunteers was 81 with a further 148 supporting us in one way or other, e.g. praying for BWS, the guests and associated bodies throughout the season. In addition, the Al Ihsaan Community again provided 'goody bags' of personal items for our guests and Bexley Foodbank provided items like baked beans and soup.

A Thank You event was held in May where some 20 people enjoyed a short church service followed by afternoon tea. The attendees included BWS Trustees, volunteers, the GCW as well as representatives from the B & B and Housing Justice.

Governance Structure

Trustees

The Charity Trustees manage the affairs of Bexley Winter Shelter, ensuring the activities are in line with the Objectives of the Charity outlined above. Decisions taken by the Trustees throughout the year have taken into account the Charity Commission's Public Benefit guidance.

influence of drugs. Repeated violations of the Community Code and these conditions resulted in the removal of the invitation to three guests.

Achievements and Performance

During the 2022 shelter season

How many people used the night shelter?

The move to providing our guests with self-contained accommodation, together with capacity issues, restricted the number of guests we could help at any one time to ten.

During the 2022 shelter season 17 guests used the shelter, of which 13 guests were male and four female. We had an average of eight guests per week. 13 of the guests were white and four BAME, with 15 holding UK citizenship and two from the rest of the world. Nine were under 35 and eight were over 35 years old. All guests had a connection with the Borough. The overwhelming majority appear to have become homeless as a result of the ending of the Government's 'Everybody In' initiative. Four had known drug dependency and three know alcohol dependency

This information was supplied voluntarily by our guests to our GCW, who was outstanding in ensuring potential guests fitted our criteria: two people had to be declined access to the shelter or were asked to leave due to not meeting certain criteria (which could be as simple as allowing no pets).

What services did the shelter offer the guests during their stay?

The shelter was open from 6th January 2022 to 30th April 2022. Each guest was accommodated in a self-contained room in B & Bs in Bexleyheath.

New socks and underwear were provided as well as a range of new or second-hand clothes, along with toiletries. Access to the Citizens Advice was arranged as well as medical professionals. No cases of COVID-19 were reported amongst the guests.

We were also, with the help of two grants – one from London Borough of Bexley and the other from NHS South East London CCG, administered by Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice - we were able to provide move-on assistance to guests. This took the form of white goods, etc to help guest establish themselves in new accommodation.

How the shelter helped people move into more permanent accommodation

Guests were signposted by our GCW and supported to complete applications for more permanent accommodation. Thames Reach, who were working with the local Council, London Borough of Bexley, were invited and regularly attended the shelter or were in contact with us. As a result of these interactions, eight guests are now in positive and stable accommodation, one guest is in a positive but unstable accommodation, one is in unstable accommodation and, unfortunately, for various reasons, we do not currently know where seven are now. Our success rate was 59%. On average, a guest stayed with us for 29+ nights before moving-on.

What preparations took place for the new shelter season which began in January 2023?

It is the duty of each Trustee to exercise their powers and to perform their functions as a Trustee in the way they decide in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the Charity.

Eligibility for Trusteeship

- A Trustee must be a natural person.
- A Trustee must be at least 16 years old.
- They must be properly appointed following the procedures and any restrictions in our governing document, with due regards to re-election.
- They must not act as a Trustee if they are disqualified, unless authorised to do so by a waiver from the Commission. The reasons for disqualification are shown in the disqualifying reasons table and include:
 - being bankrupt (undischarged) or having an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA)
 - having an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception)
 - being on the sex offenders' register

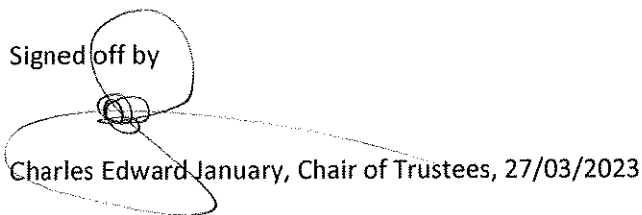
Appointment of Trustees

There should be not less than three nor more than 10 elected Trustees.

The Trustees named within this Report were appointed without an election. A number of them were sourced from previous volunteers or individuals connected with the Shelter during previous shelter seasons. Further Trustees were sourced from individuals who expressed an interest in ensuring the work of the Shelter continued and were interviewed by the Chair of the Trustees prior to appointment.

Further details on the appointment of Trustees, their responsibilities and the structure of the Charity can be found in the Constitution of Bexley Winter Shelter.

Signed off by


Charles Edward January, Chair of Trustees, 27/03/2023