

Dover Winter Night Shelter



Project Report 2022/2023



Summary by the Project Lead

This year saw a new model of Night Shelter in operation. Having tried the dormitory style accommodation in church halls for 4 years and the B&B style accommodation for two years, we now believe that we have combined best of elements of both. We had thought we were done with Covid but two weeks in we were hit by it again with staff, guests and volunteers affected. Thankfully it did not impact us for too long.

This year's Night Shelter was operated from Suffolk House in London Road. Fifteen months ago we discovered a couple of buildings that were not in use and owned by an organisation that no longer operates in Dover. One of these buildings is Suffolk House, a five storey building containing 10 bedrooms and a basement office. Following negotiations with the owners of the property we entered into a 10 year lease in October. As the building had not been used for a few years and was suffering from significant water damage from a leaking pipe there was a significant amount of work to do to prepare the building in time to open in December. Somehow, with a little grit and determination and some excellent contractors we managed to get the building ready for the 3rd of December, only two days later than planned.

Funding for the refurbishment was part of a successful grant application from the Department of Levelling Up, albeit that the funding did not arrive until the middle of December. With supportive and faithful trustees we did not let the small matter of finance delay things!

Part of the refurbishment involved converting the basement into a one-bedroom flat for our house manager, Rob. Rob had previously experienced homelessness and having used the Night Shelter a few years ago was a welcome and valuable addition to our staff at Dover Outreach Centre. His experience and insight has been incredibly beneficial for the smooth running of this year's Night Shelter.

We were also blessed to have two of Porchlight's staff available to us part time for the period of the Night Shelter. They brought with them a slightly different skill and perspective and it was great that they were available to share the workload.

Given that we were in control of the property it allowed us to manage the building to our own standards. This also gave us more opportunities for volunteers to be involved again, particularly in sharing meals and spending time getting to know our guests.

I believe we have learnt a lot this year. There are things we know we can improve on, as there always should be but finally I would just like to say a huge thank you particularly to all of you reading this report who have had a hand in this Night Shelter, large or small, you are amazing, generous and kind-hearted folks and it would not have been the success it was without you!!

God bless you all,

Noel

Operation of the Night Shelter

Co-ordinating team

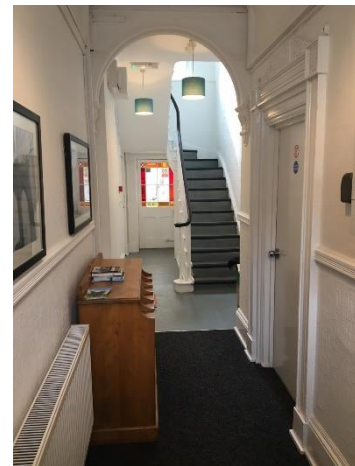
This year there was a mixed team involved in the operation of the Night Shelter as follows:

- Rob – House Manager (DOC)
- Angel – Tenancy Support (Porchlight)
- Kirsty – Tenancy Support (Porchlight)
- Noel – Project Lead (DOC)

Dates

This year's Night Shelter operated from the 3rd December 2022 to the 28th February 2023. The planned opening date needed to be put back 2 days due to delays in the completion of the building refurbishment.

Venue



This year saw the Night Shelter operating from Suffolk House, 302

London Road. This building was formerly used as a bail hostel and then left empty for 4 years until we entered into a lease for this building in October 2022. This gives the Night Shelter a permanent base for the next few years.



Nine bedrooms (one double occupancy), four kitchens, four bathrooms and a dining/ lounge area were available over the four upper floors in this building. Access was also available to a patio area and garden at the rear of the property. It provided a warm and pleasant environment for all guests.



Volunteers

There were much greater volunteering opportunities again this year as Covid regulations and guidance were relaxed. Teams had the opportunity to cook at the venue, serve and share a meal with guests again. As in previous years the Night Shelter initiative was led and supported by Christians and Churches. Whilst we are keen to maintain these good relationships and involvement into the future, it does not prevent those from other faiths or without a faith volunteering and being part of this initiative. We were blessed to have the following co-ordinating meals and teams for us:

Evening	Meal Co-ordinator	Representing
Sunday	Richard Moore	St Georges, Deal
Monday	Peter Wallace	One Church
Tuesday	Elizabeth Beck	The Beacon Church
Wednesday	Rob Lane	Dover Baptist Church
Thursday	Claudine Nutley	St Paul's Catholic Church
Friday	Chaim Kurtz	Beechgrove, Nonington
Saturday	Anne Gavin	St Martins Church

Food

Volunteers providing the evening meal had the option to cook, warm food through or serve straight from insulated delivery containers at the venue. It was a little frustrating that the smallest kitchen is on the ground floor and next to the dining area. However, whichever option our meal providers chose the food was always good and welcomed by the guests.

We were very aware of the continuing Covid risk, particularly to our volunteers, so some evening meal providers placed individual meals in foil containers and delivered to the Outreach Centre in insulated food delivery bags each day between 18.30 and 19.00.

Breakfasts were again provided at the Sunrise Cafe 6 days a week and food left at Suffolk House for Sunday morning breakfast as there was access to well equipped kitchens.

Referrals and Guests

Referrals for potential guests came through Dover Outreach Centre (Drop In), Dover District Council, Porchlight, Serveco, the Police and other agencies.

This year the following referrals were received/undertaken:

- Thirty three completed/received
- Twenty were offered a place in the Night Shelter and stayed one or more nights
- Ten were placed on the waiting list and then accommodated temporarily elsewhere
- Four guests were female
- Two of the guests were foreign nationals

All guests enjoyed the security of having their own room/space and not having to leave at a specific time. Room inspections were undertaken every Wednesday afternoon to check that our guests were looking after themselves and their rooms. Very few issues that needed addressing were ever discovered at these times.

Behaviour

All guests accepted and signed a Guest Agreement which gave details of the venue and the conditions of entry and some rules around conduct. This year, as we had full control over the venue we were able to introduce stricter rules around drug and alcohol use. We operated a “three strikes and out” policy unless incidents were of a very serious nature.

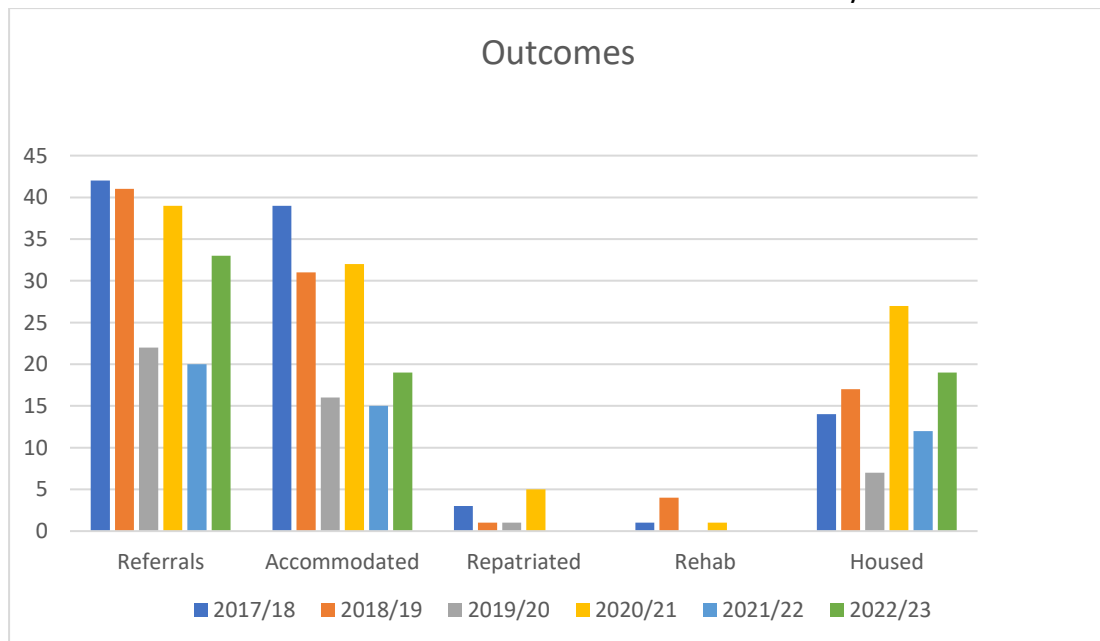
Over the course of the Night Shelter only two guests were asked to leave permanently, and alcohol use in the building was the cause in both cases. We were fortunate to find them alternative temporary accommodation which meant that they did not need end up back on the streets.

Outcomes

Following support provided through the Night Shelter, the Outreach Centre, Dover District Council, Porchlight, and Serveco the following outcomes have been achieved:

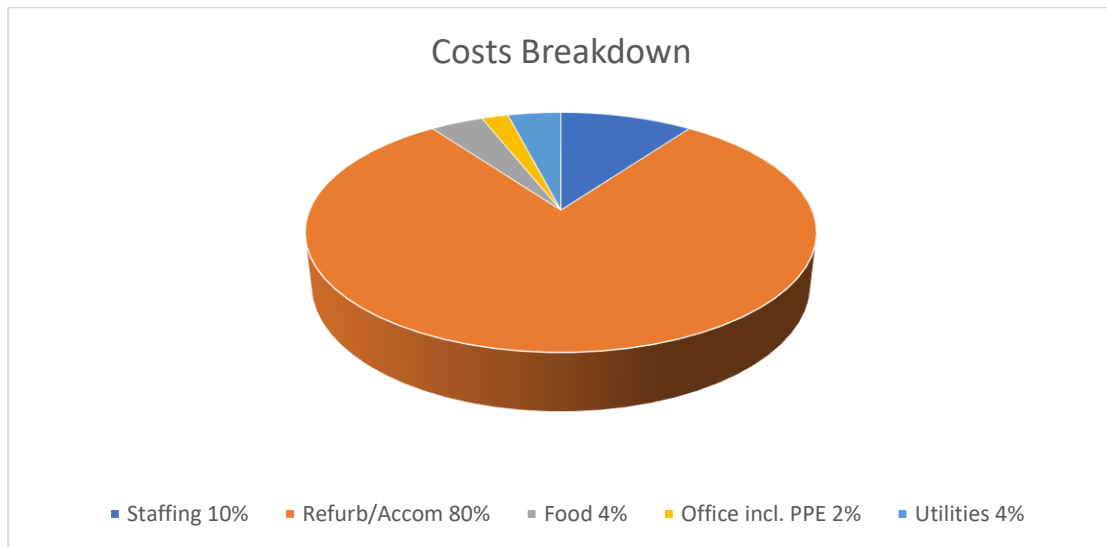
- Four housed in our accommodation at Victory House
- Four remained at Suffolk House awaiting permanent accommodation
- Three housed by Porchlight
- Three back to sofa surfing/family
- Two housed in our accommodation at Oban House
- Two moved to private rented/housing association
- One recalled to prison
- One chose to go back on the street of his own accord

The chart below shows outcomes over the last six years.



Finance

This was the first year that the costs of the Night Shelter were fully funded by grants from the Department for Levelling Up and Dover District Council.



Feedback from Guests

As part of a desire to reflect and improve for future initiatives we asked our guests the following questions to which they gave a score of 1 to 10. The average scores are shown in red.

- How was your stay at Suffolk House? **8.5**
- How satisfied were you with the food? **9.3**
- How did you find your room? **8.5**
- How did you sleep? **6.8**
- How did you find the facilities? **9.3**
- How did you find the referral process? **9.3**
- How approachable were the staff? **9.3**

They also gave the following feedback.

"I am so grateful for all the support and help everyone has given me. I just want to say a big thank you for everything"

"I am epileptic and was always looked after. It has been lovely, very comfortable beds."

"I appreciate everything a lot, only suggestion would be more variety with the dinners. There were a few noisy guests but this was soon resolved."

"You are all heroes and life savers"

Feedback from volunteers

Feedback was generally positive, and we found the Night Shelter to be very welcoming when we visited on Sundays. A couple of points to raise though:

- Food wastage - I think this improved after we had the discussion mid-way through, which was good.
- Numbers eating with us was typically between 3 and 6 with maybe 2 more being seen or understood to be taking food to their rooms.

Richard M

Feedback from staff

I just wanted to say a massive thank you to all of the volunteers that put time and effort out of their busy day. On another personal note, I am aware that we as a team have helped out a lot of people most in need but I feel that the guests who stayed at Suffolk House also helped me by opening up to me about a lot of issues they are experiencing and in doing so reminded me of where I had come from going through many of the experiences myself which I felt kept me humble and also thankful that I could relate to them and help as best I could any issues they were going through.

Rob D (House Manager)

During my time at the winter Night Shelter, I found that the 13-week duration given for the clients was a good time for those in crisis to reflect and get great support from those who can lead them in the right direction. There was great communication from those at the Outreach Centre and enjoyed my time working in this initiative.

Angel (Porchlight)

