

King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter

A photograph of a bedside table in a room. On the table is a lamp with a white shade decorated with blue floral patterns and a gold-colored base. Next to the lamp is a card that says "thank you" in red and blue letters, surrounded by colorful confetti. The background shows a window with dark curtains and a patterned lampshade.

Impact Report 2019-20

The Bishop of Lynn, our Co-Patron, writes:

(Writing during the Coronavirus crisis) “Currently, we tend to wish that others will ‘keep safe’ as we end letters or emails; I find it very heartening that, in the number of very telling comments from this last winter’s guests, is an affirmation of how ‘safe’ one of our 104 guests felt with us. The fact that both the total number of guests, and the number of nights on which we were full, had increased on the year before says a very great deal about the value of what we do: thanks entirely to the dedicated team of staff and volunteers, and the wide variety of people and organisations who support this vital work. I have no doubt but that the King of Heaven and the Son of Man (Matthew 25:31-40) will be smiling in gratitude and approval.”

The Right Rev’d Jonathan Meyrick, Bishop of Lynn

The High Sheriff of Norfolk writes:

“What a brilliant place, run with such determination and love ...To visit the house is to feel a sense of welcome”

Lady Agnew, High Sheriff of Norfolk 2019-20



The Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, our Co-Patron, writes:

“The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter is a superb example of charitable and voluntary work. Everyone involved deserves heartfelt thanks.

In these unique circumstances this year the shelter remains so important and will depend on our support to re- open in the autumn.”

Cllr Geoff Hipperson, Mayor of the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

The Chair of Trustees writes:

“The operation of King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter has been made possible by dedicated staff, willing volunteers and generous benefactors. We are grateful to everyone who has made the shelter such a warm and welcoming place of sanctuary for our guests.”

Canon Adrian Ling, Chair of Trustees

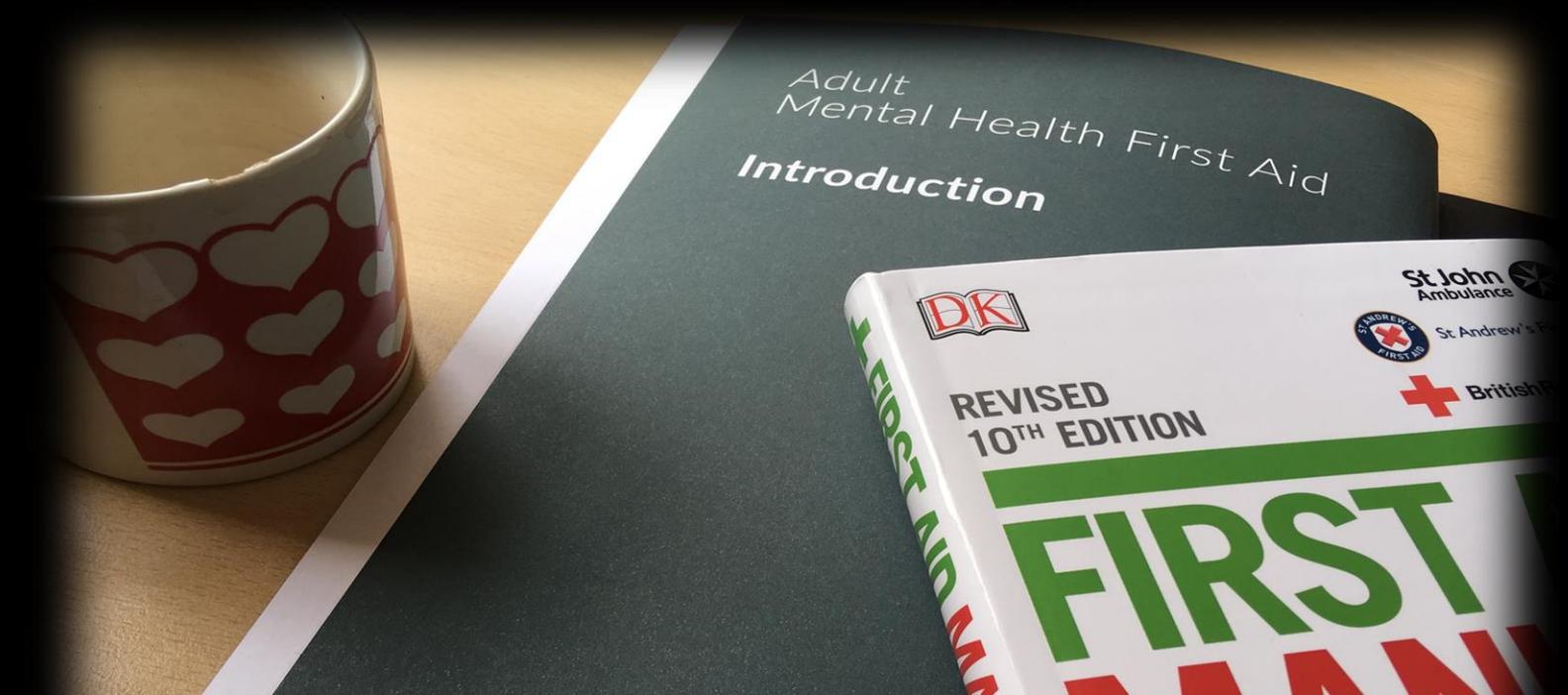


Every time you begin a good work you should pray ...

a second winter for the Night Shelter

The Night Shelter opened for our second full winter season on 31st October 2019 and welcomed the homeless every night until 30th March: a total of 104 guests for an amazing 2,953 individual nights' stay. This work was made possible by the dedication and commitment of a huge number of people from our staff and 180+ volunteers who cooked and cared for our guests, to the partner agencies who worked with us on housing needs and further support, to the wonderful response from local communities raising money and donating food. This Report celebrates their efforts, outlines the challenges faced along the way, and offers something of our hope and vision for the future.

You'll see our title headings for this year's Report are taken from the *Rule of St Benedict*, written in around the year 540 to help new communities of monks learn to live and work well together, focus on what really matters and keep hoping whatever trials might face them. It's a book which has stood the test of time (if you go to the Cathedral in Norwich you'll hear a bit read aloud every day) and has wisdom to offer a Night Shelter in 2020 too – never the easiest of communities but surely one of the most rewarding. The Night Shelter is a Christian foundation but has been richly blessed by people – staff, volunteers, funding organisations, and homeless guests – of all faiths and none: if you are reading this then we hope that you will find here something of our work, be encouraged by it and of course keep in touch!





Reviewing the 2018-19 winter season had encouraged us to look at three areas where particular work would be needed this year: our work with overseas guests, including those from Eastern Europe not currently accessing benefits; a focus on mental health, both of our guests and those working with them; and a greater degree of partnership working particularly looking at housing and guests not readily able to access further support.

We have been fortunate this year to work with the following partner agencies:

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk * Norfolk Police * Change, Grow, Live (*support for people suffering with addiction*) * The Purfleet Trust * Probation Services * HMP Norwich * Sanctuary Housing (*formerly Genesis*) including *Street Outreach* * One to One Project (*counselling*) * Hanseatic Union (*help and advice for people from Eastern Europe*) * Norfolk County Council People from Abroad Team * Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services * Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust ... and more.

“I was made to feel very welcome”

“You made me feel positive and I can't thank you enough”

(Guest comments on their stay with us, March 2020)

The Lord looks for his workman and calls to him ...

who makes the Night Shelter possible?

The Night Shelter as a Registered Charity is overseen by a Board of Trustees drawn from local churches, and is run on an operational level by a year-round Co-ordinator supported during the winter months by six other full- or part-time staff. They are joined on each shift by a team of volunteers who share responsibility for the care and welfare of the guests who stay with us.

All staff obtain qualifications in Safeguarding, First Aid and Food Hygiene: this year thanks to Norfolk and Waveney Mind we were able to add Mental Health First Aid as part of our commitment to better understanding and support for our guests' mental health needs. We also spent time looking at our understanding of addiction and street drugs, of human trafficking and modern-day slavery, and participated in a multi-agency workshop run by Norfolk Police to look at our response to the scourge of County Lines. We never think we've seen everything: but we can try to be prepared!



“I was a guest here a year ago. It's been a pleasure to come back and volunteer and give something back to the Night Shelter”

“I loved my shifts, they did not seem like work”

“Being part of the team is very rewarding”

Volunteer comments at the end-of-season Review, March 2020. Many of the staff and volunteers were also involved in preparing the Night Shelter for a new season: including decorating and garden construction, see previous page!

“The Winter Night Shelter at King’s Lynn has been hugely successful in assisting those with immediate overnight housing needs, in the coldest months of the year, also ensuring they are given a hot meal and warm surroundings to get away from the cold. The Night Shelter has a vast number of volunteers who assist in its running, and I am really impressed with the compassion and energy of those giving their free time to help others. King’s Lynn Town and the wider Borough is hugely fortunate to have such a progressive shelter, and Norfolk Constabulary have seen the benefits first hand.”

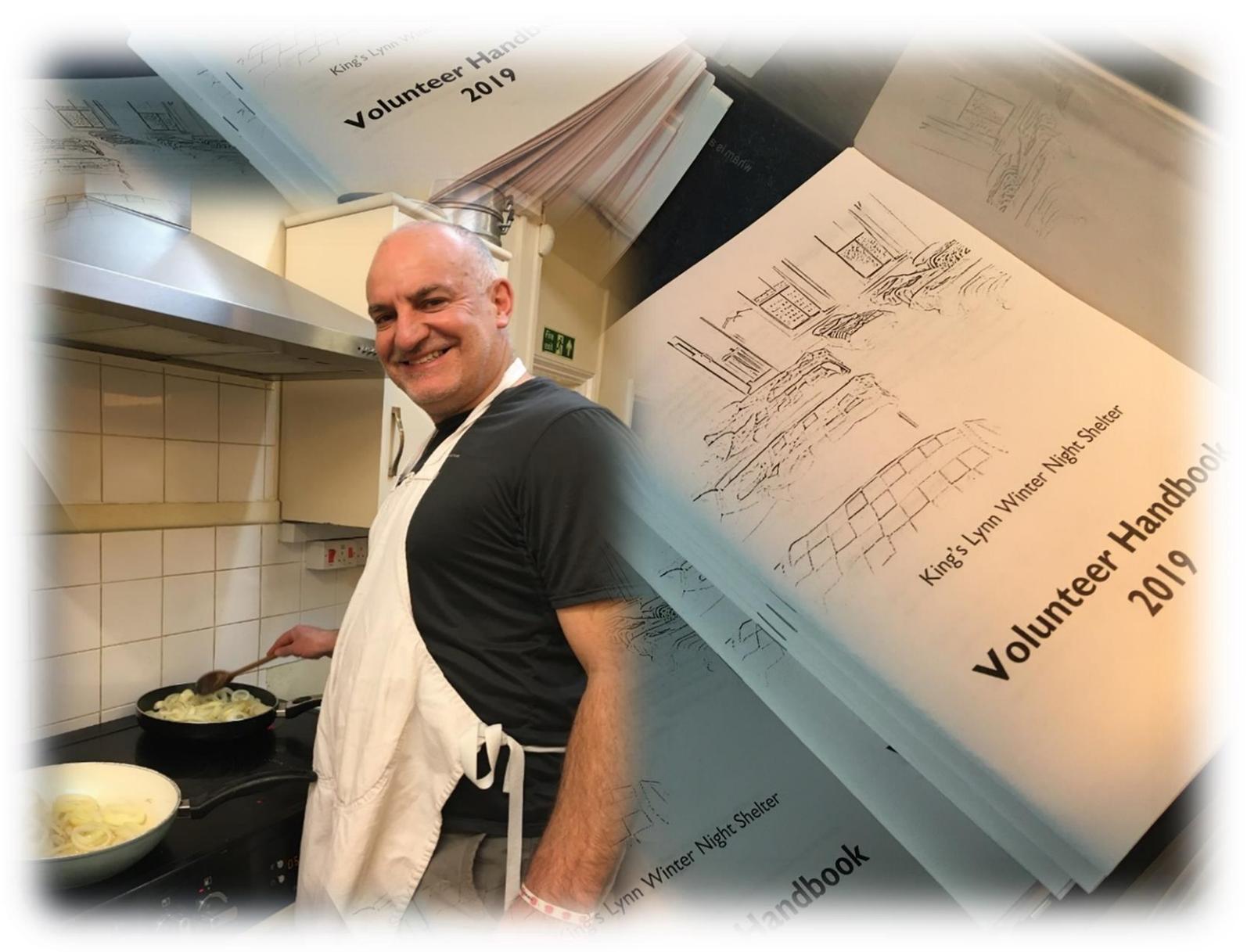
Chief Inspector Amie Abbs (King’s Lynn & Breckland), Norfolk Police

“It is a very humbling experience”

“I have met some wonderful people during my period of volunteering and was amazed to see people’s generosity and commitment”

“When we all come together we can achieve so much”

Comments from our 2019-20 volunteers



Do not be guided in your actions by the values of this world ...

who pays for the Night Shelter?

In January 2020 the King's Lynn Community Cinema hosted a fundraising film evening for the Night Shelter of the new Ken Loach film *Sorry We Missed You*, at which nearly £1,300 was raised. The film tells the story of a family's struggles with zero-hours contracts, hardship and the strain on family life, and came after an astonishing Christmas at the Night Shelter where we had once again been almost overwhelmed with kindness from the local community in response to Lynn's *Your Local Paper Winter Appeal*.

In the introduction to the film our Co-ordinator recalled a Christmas card received by a guest: released from detainment under the Mental Health Act in a psychiatric hospital to spend a second winter on the streets, the card was sent by his mother. "It's the most wonderful time of year!" was printed on the front: and inside was written "I love you".

It is always a wonderful time of year at the Night Shelter, even on a cold wet January evening, or at Christmas with no home and no family able to help, because of the love and generosity which is shown, week after week, to those who stay here. Entirely from donations, every guest is offered a hot meal every night, snacks to take away and breakfast in the morning: they have clean new underwear and socks, and all the toiletries they can use: even when the nation ran out in the first weeks of Coronavirus we were still being given toilet paper, sometimes one roll at a time by people who had two.

"The level of support shown in donations was very moving and shows that there is compassion and concern in our community for those who are homeless, vulnerable and often overlooked." (a volunteer)



For the financial year 2019-20 the Night Shelter received £30,000 from the Borough Council towards our budget of £112,827: all the remainder had to be raised from a combination of grant applications, fundraising events and appeals for gifts.

We are very grateful to all who supported us at the following events:

Heritage Open Day * Hunstanton Lawn Tennis Tournament Week * Old Hunstanton Flower Festival * King's Lynn Community Cinema Film Night * Sainsbury's Collection Day * GEAR 10K * and many Harvest Suppers, Carol Services, concerts and more ...

And to the following for gifts and grants made to the Night Shelter:

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (collection to mark the retirement of the Chief Executive, Ray Harding) * Norfolk Community Foundation Surviving Winter Fund * The Mercers' Company * Bishop Radford Trust * Caritas Alive in Faith Project Grants * Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government grant from the Cold Weather Fund * Sandringham Flower Show * Farthing Trust * Tesco Bags of Help * Waitrose Community Foundation * Wolferton Social Club * The Mariners, Old Hunstanton * Flitcham Ladies Group * Martin Folkes Lodge * The Philanthropic Lodge * Queen Elizabeth Hospital Social Work Team * Hunstanton Bridge Club * Reffley Community Hall * The Magdalen Singers * West Norfolk Needlework & Craft Club * Hunstanton Community Choir * Dersingham WI * Borroway Drive WI * King's Lynn Priory Rotary Club * The Meadows Trust * Goodwins Hall Care Home * Springwood High School * Crimplasham Carol Singers * Downham Market Ladies Friendship Circle * Southery Bingo Players * Whitefriars School * West Norfolk Lodge * Nar Valley Choir * Hunstanton Rotary * Cooper and Elms * Freebridge Community Housing * Orsted Wind Farm Community Projects * King's Lynn Mayor's Charity of the Year * King's Lynn Male Voice Choir * Hunstanton Inner Wheel * Deepdale Stores * Thaxters of Dersingham * Centrica * Morrisons Community Support * Tesco Fairshare Scheme * Westfield House School * One Stop Reffley * Prontaprint * Cooper Roller Bearings * St James' Surgery Exton Road * Hayley Group Ltd * Kemps of Hunstanton * Purple Events * Gayton Primary School * Home Instead Senior Care * The Country Food Trust * Legge Farms * The Foldgate Inn * St Botolph Grimston * St Andrew Congham * All Saints High Kelling * St Mary Burnham Deepdale * St Mary Titchwell * Stanhoe Methodist * St James the Great Castle Acre * St Mary East Rudham * The Church in the Woottons * Marham Methodist * St Mary West Winch * Union Church Hunstanton * Hunstanton Methodist * King's Lynn Church of the Nazarene * All Saints South Lynn with St Peter's West Lynn * St Mary Sedgford * Norwich Cathedral * Stanhoe Methodist * Dersingham Methodist * King's Lynn Minster * Sandringham and West Newton Churches * St Margaret Clenchwarton * London Road Methodist Church * St Mary Bexwell * All Saint's Foulden * Cornerstone Barroway Drove * Society of St Margaret * St Nicholas Ashill * St Mary's Holme-next-the-Sea * Cornerstone Baptist Church * St John's in the Walks * St Mary Bexwell * St Andrew Holt * The GAP Grimston ... and many generous individual benefactors and friends

All guests who arrive should be treated as though they were Christ ... so how do we help?

“I was surprised by the kindness” (*a guest*)

“The staff and volunteers were very helpful, you couldn’t ask for better people” (*a guest*)

“Guests are shown a great deal of respect and have been encouraged to feel human, valued and heard” (*a volunteer*)

The first purpose of the Night Shelter is simply to save lives: to provide shelter and rest during the coldest months of the year to people who would otherwise be sleeping on the street. In welcoming them however we are making possible further help and engagement and this in turn leads to new beginnings: we are not only keeping people alive, we are also offering them a new beginning, new help and new hope.



This winter we were delighted to welcome colleagues from the Borough Council for a weekly “housing surgery” evening, with particular encouragement given to guests to attend who were not accessing housing support in other ways. Street Outreach joined our guests for breakfast twice a week and our work with all our partner agencies continued with weekly meetings to look through the “guest list” together and consider individuals’ plans. As guests grew to know and trust us we were often asked to support them beyond the Night Shelter’s hours: visiting hospital and prison, accompanying to multi-agency meetings, to mental health appointments, to court. It can mean a great deal to someone not to have to go to these places alone.

A further essential help for our guests this winter was to seek further support for our overseas guests, the majority from Lithuania and Latvia who had come originally to the UK in search of work but were homeless through ill health, domestic violence, alcoholism, loss of documents or family breakdown. Many had been with us the previous winter, none were claiming benefits and all needed bilingual support.

With the help of the Hanseatic Union, the Borough Council and the County Council People from Abroad Team, and financial support from us, a number of these guests were able to secure passports (only possible by attending a booked appointment at an embassy in London) and begin a process of claiming benefits, opening bank accounts or obtaining fairly paid employment. We will seek to build on this work next winter with a further search for bilingual volunteers or staff to be sure we understand the difficulties faced by all our Night Shelter guests.

“The Night Shelter has been invaluable. As an Accommodation Support Officer in Probation I’ve appreciated that you have been able to provide a warm, safe place for those who find themselves homeless, many of whom have just been released from a custodial sentence. Working alongside the Night Shelter has been pleasurable and I have always received accurate information every morning on who has been resident the previous evening. It would be fantastic if the Night Shelter could be open all year round.”

Jeni Saunders, Norfolk and Suffolk Community Rehabilitation

“The Night Shelter has provided a life line for people whose circumstances have meant their ability to access accommodation has been difficult, and has helped some very vulnerable people in our community avoid the very dangerous nature of sleeping rough in the winter months. The lessons learned from last year were put into practice with colleagues from the Borough Council and their partners working constructively with people using the service throughout the winter to help them take steps towards accessing accommodation and the support they need. I look forward to working with you all and continuing our strong partnership in the future.”

Duncan Hall, Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk



Never despair of God's mercy ...

care in a crisis

“The shelter is warm and welcoming ... and manages risks well”

(Housing Justice accreditation report, January 2020)

“You have been a godsend to me and my partner” *(a guest)*

“Thank you for all your help through this hard time. If there is anything I can do to pay back the help you gave me I will help in any way” *(a guest)*

With the support of the Borough Council we undertook a comprehensive process of accreditation this winter with the national charity Housing Justice which seeks to support Night Shelters in all areas of the country. We were pleased to be awarded a “Good” accreditation with the potential to be “Outstanding” next winter as we work on further ways to connect our guests with other support available.

The accreditation visit, in January 2020, was followed by an extraordinary second half of the season in which we faced a continual series of trials: from the loss of part of our roof as Storm Ciara ripped through this sea-facing corner of Lynn in February; to the outbreak of body lice among our guests in the same month which caused many of them a great deal of shame and distress, particularly those struggling with their mental health; to the absence of many of our staff and volunteers as the early days of the Coronavirus crisis led to many people self-isolating at home through age or concern for members of their family; and finally to the challenge of seeing a crowded Night Shelter safely through to the end of the season with the country in “lockdown” and fears for the safety of all concerned.

Added to this the difficulties faced on a daily basis by up to 22 guests each night sharing rooms often with people they didn't know ... plus a total of three dogs!



“How relentlessly tough and hopeless life must seem for people struggling to survive”

(a staff member, winter 2019-20)

As Covid-19 Coronavirus reached Norfolk in March 2020 the Night Shelter adapted to the challenge as far as we were able: reducing the number of volunteers on the weekly rota, reassuring older volunteers or those leaving to care for family that we would see them again next season, reviewing hygiene procedures and anything we could do to reduce risk, including reducing the number of guests to allow for an “isolation” room. Throughout the crisis our guests remained calm: an outstanding tribute to the courage and determination of the staff and volunteers who gave their time and their love in these weeks to stay with them. When we closed as planned on March 30th – by extraordinary coincidence the day a Government directive asked local councils to move the homeless from dormitory-style shelters to individual rooms – we had had no cases of the virus at the Night Shelter this winter.

“I think what will stay with me from this time was the sense of family that came to the Night Shelter in the last weeks of the winter: many of us had separated ourselves from our own family and friends to continue working with our guests, and in an environment where social distancing was impossible due to the lack of space available, the Night Shelter became in a new sense a “household”: we saw in these weeks a much more open understanding of each other’s fears as well as profound gratitude for what we were doing. The first evening of the “lockdown” I sat outside the Night Shelter with a mother whose teenage son had hanged himself the week before, holding her hand as she cried the tears which alcohol had released for the first time: “*I just want it not to be true*”. This kind of work can only ever be a privilege: I pray we will be given the grace and help to continue in it as long as we are needed.”

Lucy McKitterick, Co-ordinator, April 2020

“I would not have missed this opportunity for the world.” *A volunteer*



We must hasten to do now what will profit us for ever ...

a new home for the Night Shelter

During the winter of 2019-20 we welcomed 104 guests to the Night Shelter, an increase on 97 guests the previous year. Even more tellingly, the number of nights when we were full – and so unable to take anyone else referred to us or coming to our door – was 24% of the total nights this winter, a substantial increase on 16% in 2018-19.

The building at 5 St Ann's Fort (an old sailors' music hall!) has served us well but is unfit for purpose: there is not room for everyone to eat together, there is only one shower, and the bedrooms are overcrowded: there is an immediate and urgent need both to increase capacity for the 2020-21 winter season and to find a safer space for our guests.

The Diocese of Norwich has made available to us on lease new premises at the former St John's Vicarage on Blackfriars Road: an ideal location with no immediate neighbours, close to the centre of town with its own parking and easy for guests to find. The house is much larger than our current building and has potential both to be run safely under capacity if restrictions from Covid-19 are still in place in the autumn, and to provide an increase of 20% in bed spaces from our current building if used to its full potential. Planning permission for change of use is in progress at the time of going to press.



With the works needed to prepare this new building for use as a Night Shelter – fire safety, security, and essential decorating works, a total of £45,234 – and with increases in staffing to reflect the greater needs from looking after a larger number of guests, **our budget for the coming year is £169,100.**

With many of our summer fundraising events for 2020 cancelled in the Covid-19 crisis, we will be especially relying this year on grants and gifts from groups and individuals to ensure that King's Lynn has a Night Shelter again for the coming winter.

The best gift to the Night Shelter is to become a Friend: set up a regular monthly donation to us, of any amount, and you will become an essential part of our future helping us plan ahead for the months and years to come. Being a Friend is for everyone, regardless of means: we value you as much for your care and involvement as for the financial help you can give. Let us know if you would like more information: or would like to be involved in other ways: the Night Shelter is only here for the most vulnerable in our community because we are all coming together to help.

“I can only see a brighter future for the homeless in King's Lynn ... I am sure we can keep developing the project and make it go from strength to strength in 2020-21” *(a volunteer)*

“It's all been so, so good and I hope this time next year I will be in a better place so I can come back and volunteer too” *(a guest)*





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