

Churches Together King's Lynn (CTKL) Winter Night Shelter project for the CTKL website.



The new Winter Night Shelter building for the homeless which is being made ready for opening at the end of October 2020 for a 5-month season, 7 nights per week.



The mayor's reception for some of the volunteers and staff who ran the night shelter for 5 months 2019-20.

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter <https://www.klwns.org.uk> was established as a registered charity in 2017 by a group of church leaders from Churches Together in King's Lynn, and is open 7 nights a week for 5 months of each year between the end of October and the end of March.

Despite the relatively small size of King's Lynn compared with the cities in which other shelters have been operating, there has been an increasing need for homelessness facilities in recent years. The town is situated between Norfolk's "sunshine coast" of holiday homes and the working arable landscape of the Fens, and combines historic architecture and arts festivals with areas of poverty and deprivation (among the top 3% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England) and a significant number of migrant workers mostly from Eastern Europe. Homelessness tends to be hidden, and a symptom of other factors such as family breakdown, poor mental health, alcohol or substance misuse, unemployment or immigration issues. In this context the Night Shelter has welcomed around 100 men and women as homeless guests in each of the last two winters.

Guests at the Night Shelter arrive as self-referrals or referred by other agencies: The Night Shelter will accept anyone over the age of 18 if we can do so safely and they have nowhere else safe to stay. We provide a hot meal (all from donated food), a bed for the night, laundry facilities and showers, breakfast, a "listening ear" and access to ongoing support; the shelter is staffed by a year-round co-ordinator, 6 seasonal staff, and over a hundred volunteers. Here are quotes from last year's guest feedback: "You made me feel positive and I can't thank you enough". "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 help".

Partnership working has been crucial to our work from its beginning: homelessness cannot be solved by any charity or agency on its own, and our guests need the good work and relationships we can build with others trying to help them. In addition to accepting referrals from other agencies such as the police and probation services, NHS, street outreach workers and the local day centre, we work closely with the Borough Council to ensure that every guest has access to a housing support worker who can advise them on their next steps. Staff are trained to be aware and seek referrals if needed for some of the crises guests may be in: county lines, modern day slavery, domestic violence, mental health and substance misuse are just some of the issues which may be involved.

The Night Shelter has been given this year the opportunity to move from our first home in a former office building into a large vicarage in the centre of town: the new St John's House has been adapted for use and will be blessed and opened by the Bishop of Lynn, our co-patron, on 28th October. In this winter of Covid-19 it is this new facility which will enable us, unlike many shelters relying on a relay of church floors, to stay open: we are thankful for the witness to the love of God for all his children which this public use of a well-known church property in the community provides, and for the opportunity to continue to serve.

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Email: nightshelter.steering@gmail.com Donations: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/10347>

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