

BRISTOL
CHURCHES
WINTER
NIGHT
SHELTER

2019 Impact Report



"Share your food with the hungry, and
give shelter to the homeless."

Isaiah 58:7

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Homelessness in Bristol

In Bristol (and the rest of the UK) rough sleeping and homelessness **increased significantly** between 2013 and 2018.* For people sleeping rough, or in temporary accommodation, **high housing costs**, **lack of social housing** and **benefit changes** are some of the barriers to securing permanent accommodation.



12,000 households are on the waiting list for **social housing**.



The maximum benefits paid are **£250+ below** market rent in Bristol.



Nearly 50% of families in temporary accommodation are **working**.

St Mungo's and **other charities and community groups** work with **Bristol City Council** to provide the vital support needed.

Existing provision:



Beds in supported housing.



65 year-round shelter beds.



42 additional beds in winter (BCWNS provides 12 of these).

Providing shelter in a **safe and stable environment** allows individuals to focus less on meeting their basic needs, such as finding a meal and shelter. They can give **more focus** to accessing support, and finding long term accommodation and employment.

The shelter's third year

The good foundations created in 2017 and 2018 were built upon this year to provide a **more structured** approach and incorporate learnings from previous years.

Training

460 volunteers took part in main training and **97** took part in one or more optional training sessions.

Optional training:



Conflict Resolution



Mental Health



First Aid



Drugs & Alcohol Awareness



Housing Justice Quality Mark

A big step forward for the shelter was being recognised for **“Excellent” practice** through the Housing Justice Quality Mark accreditation.

One week at one church

A key success of this project was that guests remained at **one church** for the **first week**. This allowed time for them to connect as a group and adjust to the project.

Continuity of provision

The Shelter **followed on directly from Caring at Christmas**. This allowed St Mungo's to assess guests staying with Caring at Christmas and refer them directly to us, which meant we had a high number of guests on our list from day one.

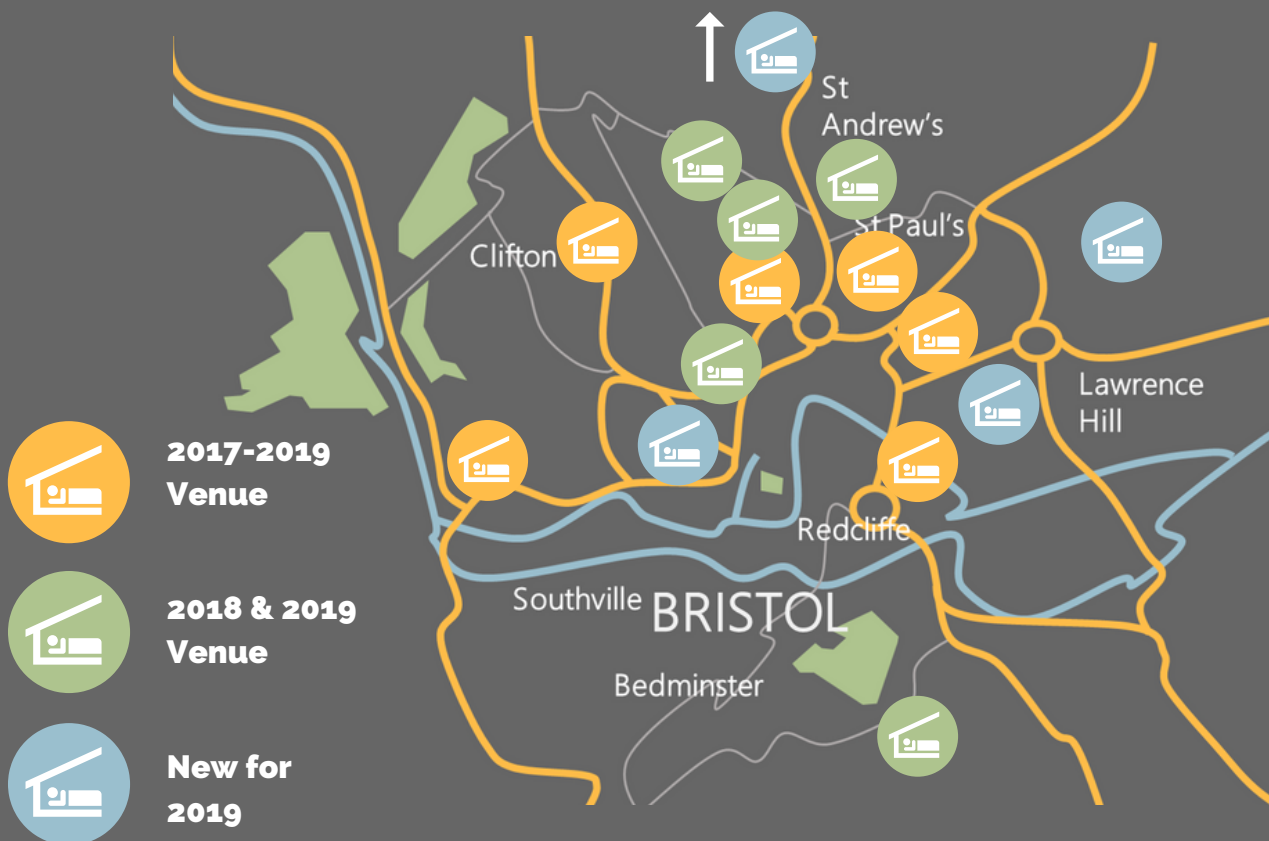
Guests

St Mungo's assessed homeless individuals and referred those with **low risk** needs to the shelter. The guests commented on how the shelter felt safe, calm and stable.

“I felt the **safest** that I have ever felt.”
- Guest

The Church's response

Four new church venues offered spaces this year, allowing the shelter to provide **1,080 beds over three months**. God's House Church lent their minibus which enabled the project to **offer guests lifts to and from the less central venues**. This was particularly needed for two of the guests who couldn't have walked that distance.



The Church's response

Churches also made generous **financial contributions** to the project, giving provision to support the behind-the-scenes effort of the shelter.

“All the churches were very good, and they have done a **wonderful job** for us. May God bless all who have done things for us.” - Guest



A night at the shelter

The atmosphere at all the venues was one of **love, peace and safety**. This year, the shelter **opened half an hour earlier** in direct response to guest & volunteer feedback. This worked better for volunteers and guests; particularly guests who wanted to get to bed early as they had to **be up early to get to work**.



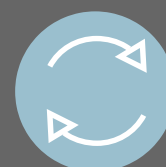
A typical night at the shelter



6pm
Volunteers
set up



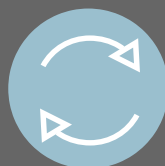
8.30pm
Social time



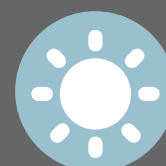
6:30-7am
Volunteer
changeover



7-8pm
Guests
arrive



9:30-10pm
Volunteer
changeover



7am
Lights on &
breakfast



8pm
Evening
meal



11pm
Lights out



8:30am
Guests
leave &
volunteers
set down

What else was on offer?



Hot showers at 6
of the venues



Toiletries,
towels,
underwear



Wi-Fi at 9 of the
venues



Minibus to and
from less
central venues



Early wake up calls for guests
who were working

Meet the volunteers

More than **530** volunteers gave time to make this year's shelter possible. Volunteers from more than **50 different churches** took part, and 11% came from the **wider community**. From cooking hearty meals and socialising with the guests, to washing bedding or driving the van or minibus, there was a **range of opportunities to help** the project run smoothly.



Refresh West kindly donated their van and a team of drivers for the duration of the project, making it possible to **move mattresses and bedding** between the different churches.

GoodGym provided a team of volunteers to help **unload mattresses** from the van at some venues.

530

530 volunteers made this year's shelter possible.

99%

99% of volunteers* said they want to volunteer, or are considering it, next year

22%

22% had no experience working with homeless or vulnerable people**, but through training, were able to give guests a great experience.

*Of 164 volunteers that returned feedback

**Data based on 440 registered volunteers



“It was just a joy to get to know the guests and build relationships with them. They always mentioned how **safe and welcome** they felt which was a blessing to them and **encouragement** to us.”
- Volunteer

Meet the guests

“The day I was going to sleep rough, St Mungo's gave me a place at the shelter. Staying here **kept me alive!**”

- Guest

By offering a safe space for guests who were assessed as low risk, the shelter provided an option for individuals who might not want to stay with those who lead more chaotic lives. The **strict no alcohol/drug policy** helped those recovering from addictions.

22 guests were **street homeless** before the shelter and two were hidden homeless. Some guests **had jobs**, but were forced to sleep rough due to needing to **save for rental deposits** before finding a home. For these guests, the shelter bridged the gap between being homeless and saving enough for a deposit. For others with fewer housing options, the shelter was at least **somewhere warm and safe to stay** at the coldest time of the year.

Meet the guests



22 guests were living on the **street** and **2** were **hidden homeless**.



8 guests had British Nationality and **16** were from Europe and the wider world.



All guests were **male** this year.



25% had disclosed alcohol misuse and **17%** drug misuse.

“Being a guest at the shelter was great. I was made to feel **welcome** and it was generally **a good place to be**. I was gutted in a way when I found permanent accommodation.” - Guest

The shelter's impact

As well as providing a hearty meal and a good night's sleep, being at the shelter allowed guests to focus on **finding accommodation and employment or signing onto courses**. Some guests also used it as an opportunity to **tackle addictions**, or reach out to **friends and family** members.

2019 impact



1,080 nights' sleep offered at the shelter. **78% of these beds were filled** in the 3 months.



8 guests **sustained work** and **5** guests found work.



6 guests moved into more **secure housing**.



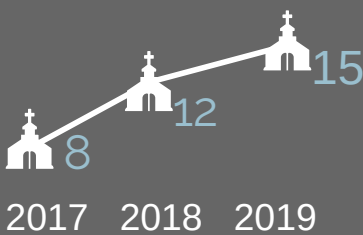
6 guests stayed for more than **60** days.



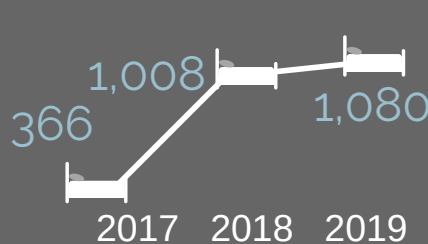
Two of the guests had **medical problems** due to regularly rough sleeping – their **health dramatically improved** during their stay.

Three years at the shelter

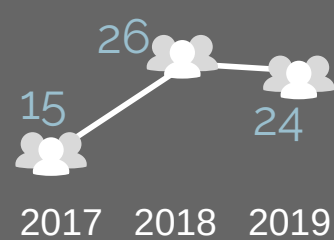
How many churches?



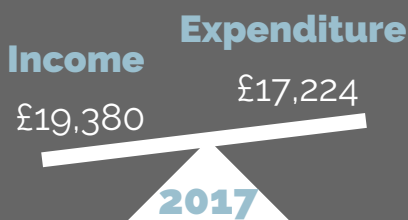
How many beds offered?



How many guests?



Finances



Planned expenses:
£5,000

*As at 30th March 2019.

Prayer

Thanks to God for his hand over this project and all those who prayed every step of the way.

“God's love enabled volunteers with differing beliefs to come together, pray together, share together. We had a time of prayer and it felt like everyone was of one accord, a powerful experience”
- Volunteer



The project was prayed for by many that had signed up for regular newsletters and took part in prayer walks. Situations were unlocked and the tangible presence of God was felt throughout the project.

Do you want to pray for next year's shelter?

Sign up for prayer updates at: www.bcwns.org.

Meet a guest

Getting a place at the shelter

I had a relationship breakdown and ended up sleeping on the streets for quite a few nights. I realised I needed help, so I went to St Mungo's and they gave me a place at the church shelter.

A new job and my own flat

Whilst at the shelter, I was able to keep working and managed to save up for my own flat, which I absolutely love. I even got a rescue cat called Millie. I love taking care of her – this is all new for me. I've also changed jobs to one with more pay and better hours.

The shelter was like a home because people cared

The church shelter is a fantastic idea. It most definitely helped me! Next year I would like to volunteer if I can to give something back to a project that has helped me. The least I can do is to help others like someone helped me.



Partnership & behind the scenes

As well as churches, there were many other **partners** who made the shelter possible.

Shelter partners

St Mungo's

St Mungo's referred guests and worked with them to find accommodation and employment throughout the period.

Housing Justice

Housing Justice gave support and recommendations for the shelter's framework. They also awarded BCWNS with their Quality Mark.

Shelter providers

Refresh West

Refresh West provided the much-needed van service to transport bedding between venues.

GoodGym

GoodGym members helped to offload mattresses from the van at each venue.

God's House Church

God's House Church plus volunteer drivers provided the vital minibus service.

Training providers

Red Cross

First Aid Awareness

ACE Bristol

Mental Health

Richard Drake, Julian Trust

Conflict Resolution

Bristol Drugs Project

Drugs/Alcohol Awareness

Other partners

Avon Fire and Rescue

Gave fire safety advice.

Johnson's the Cleaners

Dry-cleaned bedding.

Christian Action Bristol

Helped with publicity.

Crisis Centre Ministries

Provided governance and oversight.

Caring in Bristol

Lent mattresses.

Get involved

For the third year, the shelter has filled a **gap in provision** for those wanting to find stable accommodation and **move away from homelessness**. However, it can only run from the **generosity** of churches in Bristol and the wider community.

How could you be involved in 2020?



Volunteer



Pray



Offer a venue*



**Provide vans
or minibuses***



Partner your services

(e.g. laundry, hairdressing,
employment support)



Give

The shelter needs
to raise £30,000 for
the coming year.

Sign up to tell us how you can be involved:

www.bcwns.org

*Churches more than a mile from the centre require a minibus partner.