



King's Lynn Night Shelter
Impact Report 2021-22

The Bishop of Lynn, our Patron, writes:

The King's Lynn Night Shelter is an island of kindness and compassion to those who are homeless, to whom the world is often unsympathetic and harsh. Lucy and her team offer safety when it is most needed, whether the need returns or whether time in the Shelter is the first step on the road out of homelessness. The time people spend in the Night Shelter is rarely the end of their contact. Guests return to visit and off-site support is by no means unknown in ways over and above the provision of food. Feedback from guests is humbling to read in its positivity and gratitude.

Of course, the Night Shelter could not function without the help of its volunteers. From being present to cooking to donating in money or kind, from managing accounts to being a Trustee, volunteers are vital to the Shelter's very existence, and I am very glad to be able to say thank you to you all, staff, volunteer or friend in any other capacity.

May we all continue to support the Night Shelter with our prayers, donations and practical volunteering until the day when we can all rejoice that none go without food, home, safety or shelter.

The Rt Rev'd Jane Steen, Bishop of Lynn

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

I have personally seen homeless people first hand as a volunteer for several years. The Night Shelter gives people in urgent need a safe place to stay, somewhere to sleep, to be able to shower and to have a hot meal.

Staff and volunteers show compassion and concern for those men and women coming into the Night Shelter. They offer a friendly and warm welcome whilst treating everyone with respect and civility and, more importantly, kindness.

Cllr Lesley Bambridge, Mayor of Lynn

The Chair of Trustees writes:

This season has shown again how the Night Shelter can make a crucial difference for the better in the lives of our guests. We are encouraged when we see so many of them achieve positive outcomes as a result of our input to their lives.

Julian Hallett, Chair of Trustees

What did you like about the Night Shelter? I felt at home.

A guest, 30th June 2022

A new name ... no longer a “Winter” Night Shelter

The King’s Lynn Night Shelter was established as a Registered Charity by a group from local churches in 2017 and has now served the homeless of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk for five years. In 2020 we moved from our first home – an old docks and shipping office – to the large and beautiful former vicarage at St John’s House on a 15-year lease from the Diocese of Norwich. The Night Shelter is managed by a team of staff and volunteers and is funded in the greater part by grants and donations. It is open to our homeless “guests” 24 hours a day with guests in individual rooms.

By the close of the last winter season in March 2021 it was clear to us all that a new approach beyond a “winter” shelter was needed. Homelessness is not limited to the winter months and brings distress and danger at any time of year, and the one improvement to our service consistently asked by our guests was for year-round opening.

As a result of this our Charity name has now been changed from “King’s Lynn Winter Night Shelter” to “King’s Lynn Night Shelter”, and we were able to open – as an interim arrangement while more funds are raised – for a nine-month season October 2021-June 2022. During this time we were able to welcome 39 people to stay, of whom 59% achieved a positive move to further accommodation.



Looking beyond Covid ... more room for our guests

The Night Shelter before Covid, like many others across the county, provided accommodation in shared rooms. The pandemic meant that sharing was no longer possible but it also demonstrated to us very clearly that having a room and space of their own was very much better for our guests, gave them dignity and privacy, and helped them on their journey to recovery and housing. We also urgently needed to expand our capacity at St John's House as it was clear there were many more people in need of emergency help than we could currently accommodate.

Thanks to a local architect who volunteered his time, the summer of 2021 saw two of our larger rooms divided to give us a total of nine bedrooms. The costs were met with a grant from the MHCLG Winter Transformation Fund, intended to help night shelters like ours adapt their facilities to operate in post-Covid Britain. We also saw the Night Shelter covered in scaffolding for six weeks while the 1870s brickwork was repointed: to great result and funded by our landlords the Diocese of Norwich.

Finally we started to improve the garden, with a welcome advisory visit from the Bishop's House gardener, Sam Garland ... and to grow our own veg!



September ... our first Open Day

On 12th September the Night Shelter held our first Open Day at St John's House as part of King's Lynn's annual "Heritage Open Day" when historic buildings not normally open to the public welcome visitors as part of a celebration of the community's shared past. It proved a great opportunity to introduce many new friends to the Night Shelter's shared present with 335 visitors during the day to look around the house and stay for tea in the garden, and a lot of very positive conversations about our work.

September also brought a series of information and training evenings for new volunteers, covering practicalities of safeguarding and working with vulnerable adults. It is our volunteers who make the Night Shelter a home, cooking good meals, making cups of tea, being a "listening ear" when needed: many congratulations to the 48 people who returned and 25 who volunteered with us for the first time this year!

What did you like about the Night Shelter? *Security, feeling valued. The staff and volunteers were lovely and made me feel safe. They gave me strength to rebuild relationships with friends and family.*

A guest

October ... a new longer "season" opens

The Night Shelter reopened on 7th October. A newly expanded staff team (Ady, Daren, Deb, Finlay, Jenny, Jordan, Karine, Laura, Lucy, Marion, Martin, Matthew, Nick, Penny & Sarah) undertook a busy induction week which this year included training in suicide awareness and an introduction to probation services as well as first aid, understanding substance misuse and trauma-informed approaches to our work.

As a Charity working with the homeless we are especially grateful that a number of our staff have been willing to share with us that they themselves have been homeless in the past. This "lived experience" can be a great help both in reflecting with colleagues on how to support the people in our care, and as an encouragement to our guests that things can and do change: it is also living proof that anyone can become homeless and that all of us, guests, volunteers and staff have an equal value as human beings and a unique contribution to make to the lives of those around us.

Many thanks to everyone – staff and volunteers – who gave the gift of themselves this year!

November ... working with our partners

From the beginning the Night Shelter has recognised that none of us can help the homeless on our own and that partnership working – reaching out to other organisations also helping or with the potential to help our guests – is essential to the work we do. This year we have focussed especially on developing support plans for each guest with a person-centred approach which asks what are their needs at present, and who else needs to be involved: to help us understand a new guest's situation, to support their health and wellbeing, to resolve financial difficulties, to overcome barriers to housing and to support our guests when they move on.

We've been pleased this year to work with Access Community Trust, Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Change Grow Live, Christians Against Poverty, Freebridge Community Housing, Home Group, King's Lynn Foodbank, Norfolk County Council People from Abroad Team, Norfolk Police Offender Management and Operational Partnership Teams, National Probation Service, The Purfleet Trust, Sanctuary Housing & Shelter.

We are always happy to work with the Night Shelter and this year has been no exception. The weekly partnership meetings have been particularly productive in terms of strengthening our relationship with staff members at the Night Shelter and ensuring that we are aware of current guests and situations as a result of the regular communication.

*Amy Attlesey, ASB & EH Coordinator
Operational Partnership Team, Norfolk Constabulary*

December ... a different festive season

Christmas, almost without exception, is one of the hardest times of year for anyone to be homeless. For guests who are homeless as a result of bereavement or relationship breakdown, it can be a time when feelings of loss are especially difficult; for the many of our guests who are parents, knowing that their children will be in someone else's care on Christmas Day can bring a sense of profound guilt or grief.

The image opposite is one of many beautiful decorations made this year for the Night Shelter by one of our guests, a mother of seven who learned quilling and paper art in prison. The light of hope does not go out at the Night Shelter, and our work each year is to help our guests find this hope for themselves.



January ... time to meet the stars

In January 2022 came our first exciting fundraising event of the year: “An Evening with Call the Midwife”! We were delighted to welcome Heidi Thomas and Stephen McGann, screenwriter and creator and “Dr Turner” respectively of the popular TV show, for a wonderful evening at a packed Guildhall sharing some of the stories behind the series. The event raised a very welcome £4493 and was a great opportunity to introduce many people to the work we do, particularly as the 11th series of the show was being aired at the time with the very next night’s episode looking especially at homelessness and substance misuse.

We always value the chance to talk at events or with groups or organisations and share the good news of the work we can do together. This last year has brought invitations from Business Network International, Churches Together in King’s Lynn, College of West Anglia, Community Action Norfolk, Cornerstone Barroway Drove, Fleet Wood Lane Primary School, King’s Lynn Samaritans, St John’s Church in the Walks, and Swaffham Authors Books and Cake ... with special thanks for the sensitive and imaginative questions from the young people studying social care in Lynn and from school assembly in Fleet!

If your group or organisation would like to hear from us, as part of a fundraising event or just to find out what we do, please feel free to be in touch.

photo credit: The Lynn News



February ... our guests tell their stories

Anyone can find themselves homeless. Our 39 guests in the last year have included a teaching assistant, a hairdresser, a violinist, a granddad, a forklift truck driver, veterans from the military of three different countries, parents worried about how their children are coping in school, young adults who've grown up in care. They've all had in common that they had nowhere to stay, but they've also all had experience of trauma of one kind or another through bereavement, illness or injury, domestic violence, war or one of the many other experiences in childhood or adulthood which can make it that much harder to look to the future in hope.

A trauma-informed approach involves seeking to understand a person's responses to the world around them in the light of what they have experienced, and to support that person as they are. It is a way of working which both the Night Shelter and many national homelessness charities (Homeless Link, Housing Justice) are adopting as an approach which respects and honours what a person has experienced, and is both deeply realistic and looking towards healing of the whole person and a positive future.

What did you like about the Night Shelter? *The unconditional positive regard. The respectful manner of the staff and volunteers and the fact that they provided me with safe shelter when no one else would. Was the Night Shelter what you were expecting? No, I expected a chaotic environment. What I experienced was an ordered, safe and calming place to be. What did you think about the staff and volunteers? I am in their debt. I arrived here in a very poor state of health. They cared for me in every way. I recovered as a result of this. Did anything surprise you? Yes, the attention to every detail of my wellbeing. Did the Night Shelter make a difference to how you felt about yourself, or your future? Yes. It stopped me dying. What could we do to improve the Night Shelter next year? Just keep doing what you do.*

A guest, veteran of the British Armed Forces

Over the last year Shelter and the Night Shelter have worked together to advise and support people with no home in West Norfolk. The Night Shelter have welcomed me and been able to offer space where I can meet with and offer advice to their guests. Working with them means that guests are not having to repeat their story over and over again, and helps me to build a rapport with the guests in a familiar, safe environment for them.

Tanya Mills, ASG Worker King's Lynn, Shelter

March ... how to feed a “family”

Our friends are often surprised to learn that the Night Shelter does not have a budget for feeding our guests: everything we give them comes from donations. Each day we provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for our guests – cooked in the evenings by a rota of volunteers – with special meals this year on Christmas Eve, 6th January (in honour of some of our Orthodox Eastern European guests whose principal Christmas celebration this is), and Easter. We even managed a second round of Easter eggs at Orthodox Easter – which arrived this year a week after the first!

Most of our guests arrive hungry or having gone some time without regular meals. One who arrived on a wet night in November told us he had been surviving on the streets by eating kebabs from rubbish bins. Thanks to donations from the local community, collections in schools, supermarket FairShare schemes and local businesses, we have had enough food for everyone: and the day we emptied the shelves for people in need and asked for help on social media, we were given so much good food that all our cupboards were full.

As well as our guests, the Night Shelter helped a further 197 people over the year who were sleeping rough, in other emergency accommodation, sofa surfing or had stayed with us previously and found a home but were struggling to feed themselves. We always ask the name and circumstances of anyone coming to ask for food, to see what else we can do to help: for many, this contact in person, particularly in the evenings and at weekends, became a vital source of support. We are seeking to work more closely with partner agencies in the coming year so that people coming to our door can find help more quickly and more information can be shared.

April ... a new springtime adventure

The Night Shelter’s first Easter brought – along with a very popular Easter Bunny Raffle! – our first ever continued opening into the spring. In previous years we had closed to our guests at the end of March when the clocks go forward: now, we were open into the long evenings and it was good to see guests enjoying and helping with the wonderful Night Shelter garden, growing seedlings, mowing the grass, feeding the birds or enjoying the chance to be at home in the garden with friends. We’ve chosen photos of the garden for this year’s Impact Report to underline just how important a beautiful and peaceful environment is for our guests’ recovery and wellbeing.



May ... the Night Shelter goes to town

On 22nd May the Night Shelter was delighted to be invited to host an “Open Garden” event at the Bishop’s House in Norwich: 4 acres of garden 900 years old and a wonderful setting for a Sunday afternoon. The event raised £1,025 and was a good opportunity for us to share the news of homelessness in West Norfolk with new friends in the city. King’s Lynn can seem a long way from the rest of Norfolk at times and we hope to find other ways to make connections with work for the homeless in Norwich and elsewhere in the year ahead.

June ... in memory and in hope

The first aim of the King’s Lynn Night Shelter since our beginning has been to save lives in West Norfolk so that nobody dies homeless on our streets. Very sadly each year has brought news of the death of one of our former guests or someone we have known and tried to help – sometimes though not always homeless at the time, but in each case years before their time. The shocking reality of the statistics behind the UK’s life expectancy for rough sleepers – 47 years for men and 43 years for women – is that people we have cared for at the Night Shelter are lost each year in the bleakest of circumstances. We heard through the inquest report in the local news that the body of one man in his thirties who had been a guest for two winters was found in a tent in local countryside having evidently passed away some weeks before.

The Platinum Jubilee, with its themes of service and longevity, of respect and community, presented us with a good occasion to mark these lives in a lasting way which would serve as a witness to the value of every human life and provide a space to honour those we had lost. With financial support from the Borough Council and from generous local businesses, and help digging and planting from our guests, we designed and constructed a rose garden with each rose chosen as far as possible by the friends and family of those remembered. The Jubilee Memorial Garden was blessed by the Bishop of Lynn at a short service of prayer and thanksgiving on 4th June and it was especially good to be able to welcome the families of some of those remembered. An engraved metal plaque marks the garden:

*Jesus said,
In my Father’s house are many rooms*

The Night Shelter looks ahead

In the coming year the Night Shelter will open for another nine-month season from October 2022 to June 2023, with the hope of opening all year round within the next two years. This hope will largely depend on funding and volunteers but with the rising cost of living crisis the need is clear and we look forward to seeing a year-round safe space for the homeless in Lynn become a reality. At the same time, we are acutely conscious that while we welcomed 39 people to stay at the Night Shelter this year, another 68 were referred to us or asked to stay and could not be accommodated as we had no room. We hope to extend our capacity further by building on to St John's House within the next year.

The Night Shelter works closely with national charity Housing Justice and it was good to welcome them for a visit this year and to receive their commendation as an "Excellent" Night Shelter under the Quality Mark Accreditation Scheme. The scheme looks at all aspects of working from governance to guests' experience and is a helpful indication of how King's Lynn Night Shelter is seeking to meet the best possible standards for the vulnerable adults in our care.

This is an outstanding night shelter. The commitment of the organisation and demonstrable dedication of the staff and volunteers clearly impacts the guests in a positive manner. The environment is of high quality and well thought out for a homely and welcoming guest experience. There is good joint working and partnership models in place to ensure move-on options are as successful as possible.

Housing Justice, 3rd December 2021



With our thanks and appreciation to ...

All Saints South Lynn * All Saints Foulton * All Saints High Kelling * All Saints Narborough * Authors, Books, and Cake * Barratt Family Charitable Trust * The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk * Borroway Drove WI * Caritas Alive in Faith Project Grants * Chelsea Square 1994 Trust * Colleague Forum iForce Sutton * The Connection Project * Cornerstone King's Lynn * Docking Benefice * Fairstead Primary School * The Farthing Trust * Freebridge Community Housing Colleague Forum * The Geoffrey Watling Charity * Guy-Raymond Engineering * Hilden Charitable Fund * Hillington & Fritcham Good Companions Club * Hopstead * Hunstanton Bridge Club * Hunstanton Golf Club * IBA Wealth Management Ltd * King's Arms Shouldham * King's Lynn Community Cinema Club * King's Lynn Community Runners * King's Lynn Evangelical Church * King's Lynn Foodbank * King's Lynn Hygiene Bank * King's Lynn Probus Club * King's Lynn Rotary * Krusty Loaf * The Lady Hind Trust * Maxview Ltd * The Mercers Company * Middleton Aggregates * MHCLG (now DLUHC) Homelessness Transformation Fund * Morrisons Community Champions * Norfolk County Council / Community Action Norfolk Contain Outbreak Management Fund * North and South Wootton Mothers Union * North Lynn Methodist Church * Orsted East Coast Community Fund * Our Lady of the Annunciation King's Lynn * Pipe Perfect Norfolk * Phobbies Club * Renaissance Singles Social Club * South Creak Community Raffle * St Andrew Holt * St John Terrington * St Lawrence Castle Rising * St Mary Burnham Deepdale * St Mary Heacham * St Mary Holme-next-the-Sea * St Mary Sedgeford * St Mary Wimbotsham * St Nicholas Blakeney * St Nicholas Dersingham * St Peter Wolferton * Stanhoe Methodist Church * Trinity Rotary King's Lynn * Trundley Design Services * West Norfolk Lodge of Freemasons * Wolferton Club * Woottons Book Group ... and to many other individuals including:

29 "Friends of the Night Shelter" whose monthly donation, large or small, helps us budget and plan for the future;

Several hundred local people and schoolchildren who gave food and toiletries;

73 volunteers who between them gave around 9,112 hours this year in time working with our guests, at a value to the Night Shelter of £109,344 in money saved and the even more precious gift of making the Night Shelter a home;

And lastly an unknown number of friends who follow our updates and news and keep us in their thoughts and prayers.

... and a word to our friends for 2022-23

Thank you so much for reading this report and for your interest in our work. The homeless need their friends and the Night Shelter is only here because so many people come together to make it happen.

In the year July 2021 – June 2022 our annual income was comprised as follows:

Donations from individuals or groups including Gift Aid: 39%

Grants (from UK Government): 27%

Grants (from other organisations): 22%

Local authority contribution: 10%

Housing Benefit: 2%

If you have helped us in the last year, thank you. If you'd like to know more, or would like to help us in any way, please be in touch: our contact details are overleaf.

Did anything surprise you? *Yes the kindness, it was infectious.*

A guest





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