



King's Lynn Night Shelter
Impact Report 2022-23

The Bishop of Lynn, our Patron, writes:

This year has been another busy one for the Night Shelter, so the first thing to say is, Thank you. Thank you to all of you who are reading this, who support the Shelter with your prayers and your giving. Individuals, parishes, and others voluntarily sustain the Night Shelter's work, and it is impossible to overstate their contribution. If you are reading this and would like to know more about how your time or money (however small or large an amount) can take this work forward, the Night Shelter's contact details are on the back cover.

The Night Shelter has experienced three main challenges this year: continued funding needs, the plight of those who come for its services, and the continuing post-Covid and post-Brexit impact of homelessness generally. We were therefore delighted to see the Prince of Wales set out his initiative to help to tackle this last issue. So often, homelessness is addressed first by attending to the individual's problems, including drug and alcohol dependence, and then by offering housing. Initiatives in Europe which have begun by enabling people to have secure accommodation and then addressing their other issues seem to have offered longer-lasting benefits. We were delighted to see that the aim of the Prince's work is to make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable. What a wonderful vision that would be for the future.

In the meantime, thank you again for all your support of the Night Shelter. Let us continue to offer that support until we rejoice that none go without food or shelter.

The Rt Rev'd Jane Steen, Bishop of Lynn

Councillor Alexandra Kemp writes:

I am a great fan of King's Lynn Night Shelter and the courageous work it does, for the people hardest to reach, who can so often fall between the gaps for help and support. I have been grateful to have had the opportunity to work towards strengthening communication between the Borough Council and the Night Shelter, by brokering a negotiation meeting about an application for Government funding. Supporting funding applications of third-sector organisations who provide services for residents, is a key role of the Council and where we can do a lot of good.

*Councillor Alexandra Kemp, Cabinet Member for People and Communities
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council*

And from our guests:

Did the Night Shelter help you feel differently about yourself or your future?

Yes, a step forward in the right direction.

Did you feel welcome and valued here? I loved every minute of my time.

The Chair of Trustees writes:

On behalf of the Trustees, a very big “Thank You” to everyone who has been involved in the last year and contributed to another successful year for our Night Shelter.

Our brilliant staff have once again performed superbly in the day-to-day care of our guests and the running of the premises. Faced on occasion with some very difficult circumstances, it always amazes me with how they resolve these issues in such a calm and professional manner, making the right decisions at the right time.

The Shelter could not operate also without our great band of volunteers. Their dedication and commitment to looking after our guests and assisting with the running of the Night Shelter is a gift we are so thankful for, as are our guests!

We look forward to a new “season” this autumn and hope that in the coming year the Night Shelter will continue to develop as place of care, guidance and safety for the homeless of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk.

Paul Le Serve, Chair of Trustees



Opening the door ...

The Night Shelter will be six years old this autumn! We're delighted to bring you this Impact Report with the latest news of our work, and to have this opportunity to thank the very many people who have made that work possible. We hope you'll enjoy reading it, find much to reflect on, and want to know more.

For the first time this year our Report includes two stories from our guests to help illustrate both the challenges they face and the work we do, together with some lovely quotations from feedback at the end of their stay, and photos of the space that is their "home". Names and any identifying details have been changed but their stories are otherwise of our guests as we have known them here.

It's been a busy year for the Night Shelter in our national engagement too. We have been a member of homelessness charity Housing Justice since 2019 (we were accredited as "Excellent" in their latest review in December 2021) and joined their first ever (free!) residential conference earlier this summer, and we've ended the year with a new membership of Homeless Link. We were pleased that our Co-ordinator was accepted in their (also free!) "Established Leaders" cohort this year, and inspired by this programme we look forward to working more closely with them particularly in staff training and development and in how small local charities like ours can be part of influencing national policy and change.

You'll find in this Report information on how we operate and who we help, an insight into homelessness and what can make it so hard to move on, and news of our volunteers and staff together with our fundraising work and the partner organisations also involved in supporting our guests. You'll find also details of the Charity's finances, and you'll see just how crucial the generosity of our benefactors this year has been.

The photos for this year's Report (except the Christmas wreath made for us by one of our friends!) were all taken on one spring day this year when St John's House and its lovely garden were looking their very best. Six years ago we began as a "winter" night shelter, to help people in the cold, and we still do that. But we're also all about springtime, as a young charity growing and expanding, in helping people find new beginnings and "springtime" in their own lives, and most importantly in "opening the door to compassion" for our guests with the springtime gift of hope.

What did you like about the Night Shelter? *It was home from home.*

A guest

... who came to stay?

The Night Shelter opened for nine months between October 2022 and June 2023, and welcomed 31 guests (a total of 8,277 nights' stay, of which unused rooms were in single figures). This was fewer than the 39 guests over the same period in 2021-22, possibly in part because “moving on” from temporary accommodation has become so difficult: the long wait for social housing properties has an effect on “move-on” hostels so that fewer rooms become available for people moving on from the Night Shelter; private landlords increasingly ask for a guarantor or are unwilling to accept tenants on benefits; and the gap between market rents and the Local Housing Allowance set by the Government for each area of the country continues to increase.

We are grateful that it's been possible for 4 of this year's guests to move to private rented properties, 8 to supported accommodation or “move on” hostels, and 2 to social housing properties. Of the remainder, 3 guests left us to stay in hospital, 4 in other temporary accommodation, 7 with family or friends, and 3 very sadly slept rough (*all figures are from our best knowledge of where each guest stayed on the first night after leaving us*). The Night Shelter's one-to-one support workers continue to liaise closely with a number of partner organisations to seek the best possible outcome for each of our guests.





Meet our guests ... Tom

When “Tom” came to stay with us this year it was the third year we had welcomed him, and we knew both him and his partner well. It was a difficult relationship and Tom had served a prison sentence in the time we’d known him, one of several guests we’ve had the privilege of visiting inside (and most often, the Night Shelter is their only visitor).

He came back to us this year worried and depressed. His partner was sick and in hospital, and he had begun to lose hope of ever having a home of his own: he’d been sofa surfing since release from prison, drinking to cope, and eventually his options for staying with family or friends came to an end.

We supported him in visiting his partner regularly, and when she died at Christmas the Night Shelter arranged a special service to remember her and help him to grieve. At the same time, we supported him to think of his own future, and we were proud of Tom when he rose to the challenge, gave a good interview at a move-on housing scheme, and was offered a room.

We saw a remarkable change in Tom this year, as he learned to manage alcohol, responded to the people trying to help, and made peace with his past. He shared with us:

What did you like about the Night Shelter? It was an absolute privilege to be around such loving and caring people.

Did your stay at the Night Shelter make a difference to how you felt about yourself? Yes, it has made me more determined about myself and my future.

I have worked closely with the night shelter over the last few years and have had the privilege of witnessing the results of the non-judgemental and intensive support provided to their guests. The people supported by the night shelter appear to have complex needs and be some of the most vulnerable people I have met for a myriad of reasons. This intensive non-judgmental support has, more often than not, provided guests with the stable footing to make changes to their lives and have a different view of what is possible for them. From that basis they can, and sometimes do, make some of the changes to their own lives that they would not have dreamed possible before going to the Night Shelter. These changes are not always visible from outside, but they are enormous to the individual and lay the foundation for future progress.

Lou Marrs, Housing Rights Worker, Shelter

Working together ... with our partners

Homelessness is not a simple problem. It could happen to any of us, at any time, and most of our guests would say they never imagined that it could happen to them. The Night Shelter especially values the many organisations who have worked with us this year to help and support our guests, including:

Access Community Trust * Access Migrant Support * Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk * Broadland Housing Association * Change Grow Live * Freebridge Community Housing * The Harbour Centre * King's Lynn Debt Centre * King's Lynn Foodbank * National Probation Service * Norfolk County Council Adult and Children's Services * Norfolk Police * The Purfleet Trust * Sanctuary Housing * Shelter ... and our local GP surgeries, hospitals and their teams.

The Operational Partnership Team are always happy to work with the Night Shelter and to attend the weekly meetings which help to strengthen our partnership working with the staff and other agencies. The partnership working with the Night Shelter gives us the best opportunity to support those using the service.

PC Roz Hamilton, Operational Partnership Team, Norfolk Police



... and as a team

Our staff and volunteers work as a team to manage the Night Shelter and to look after our guests, 24 hours a day, for nine months of the year. As a small charity our greatest cost each year is staffing and as part of our commitment to directing as many of our resources as possible to front line work, all of our staff except one (our long-suffering part time finance officer!) are involved in work directly with our guests. It can be a difficult job as well as a rewarding one and we're very grateful to Ady, Daren, Deb, George, Jenny, John, Jordan, Karine, Laura, Lucy, Marion, Matthew, Nick, Sarah and Wiktorja for their part in the Night Shelter's team work this year.

Our volunteers work with staff in the evenings, at night and in the early mornings, and their extraordinary kindness and generosity of time makes the Night Shelter a "home". They cook a hot meal for our guests each evening, are here when they wake up, and support our staff through the night to offer a listening ear and pastoral care. We are deeply grateful that even as charity volunteering nationally continues to fall, 80 people have come forward this year to help our guests.

At the same time, the last year has been financially the most challenging yet. For the first time in 4 years we were awarded no Government funding, and as a consequence had to draw on our reserves to ensure that the Night Shelter could remain open for the full nine month season. We are deeply grateful to the individuals and organisations whose gifts have helped us through the year and made the continued existence of this vital Charity possible.

We look forward in the coming year to working on our 2023-24 fundraising campaign "**Opening the door to compassion**" with an exciting programme of events and opportunities for involvement including the launch of our first ever Community Partners scheme.

What have you most enjoyed about volunteering at the Night Shelter?

Being part of the guests' journey, the highs, lows, ups, downs, laughter and tears. Holding on to hope.

The great care and commitment of the staff and the feeling that we can support them and our guests in our role as volunteers.

What have you learned?

I have learned that we could all be in the same situation and not to judge.

That there is always someone to talk to and to listen to you.

Volunteers' responses for annual strategy review, May 2023



Meet our guests ... Pete

We first met “Pete” at our former home at St Ann’s Fort, a reluctant guest who stayed with us only when it was too cold or too difficult to manage somewhere else. He was a fisherman who went out on the Wash with the tide most days, and whose captain often let him sleep on the boat; he was dressed for outdoors, apparently hardy, and once brought the other guests a bag of brown shrimps to have with their tea. But he was also very vulnerable, using alcohol to cope, and with a kindness which could sometimes lead others to exploit him.

A few weeks later the (then) Bishop of Lynn came to volunteer for the evening, helping welcome our guests. It can sometimes take a different face to make a new conversation possible, and when the Bishop asked Pete how he was, he broke down in tears. He told us how he had only lately lost his parents whose home had always been his own. *It’s awful losing your parents*, said the Bishop, meaning it. They talked.

And then, this spring, Pete found us again. He was still working, but homeless again and in his 50s he had no experience of private renting or how to look for somewhere to live. He was sleeping, he said, under a nearby road bridge, and was struggling to access support. We offered him a room at the Night Shelter as soon as we could, and this time he never missed a night: we were able to support him in accessing the rental market and he was one of the guests who left us this year with a tenancy and a home.

We all want our guests not to come back, for their homelessness to be quickly and permanently resolved. We work for that end. But good news is worth waiting for, and a guest who comes back to us is not a failure but an opportunity for us to continue learning how best we can help, and for the guest to have a vital second chance.

We asked him,

*Did your stay at the Night Shelter make a difference to how you felt about yourself? **Yes it helped me get over my depression and alcohol abuse.***

*What could we do to improve the Night Shelter next year? **Be open all year round.***

The night shelter is a lifeline for individuals who struggle to find help from other agencies. Not only does the Night Shelter provide accommodation for those who have had their applications turned down by other providers, it is also a source of comfort and support for vulnerable people in the community where meals and advice are provided. It is important that the Night Shelter is well funded so that they can continue with their good work.

Michael Montague, Probation Practitioner, The Probation Service

So what's next for the Night Shelter?

It's still springtime at the Night Shelter – that is, we're still growing! In the last six years we've grown from a Friday and Saturday overnight shelter during the winter months, to providing 24/7 accommodation for nine months of the year ... and we're hoping that the coming year will see us extend this provision so that we're open for our guests all year round.

As the only Night Shelter (perhaps we should say 24/7 Shelter!) in West Norfolk, the Charity is keen to work with our local authority to develop our role in welcoming the most vulnerable rough sleepers and those with complex needs, especially those who for a variety of reasons are unable to access shelter anywhere else. It's been especially good this year to be able to develop our staff skills in supporting our guests and we look forward to building on this over the coming months.

Meanwhile, we are hoping to expand! The Night Shelter has been granted planning permission for an extension which will see our number of rooms increase by 50% from 8 to 12. It is always difficult to say how many people we haven't been able to accommodate but a key indicator of the need has been local authority spending on bed and breakfast temporary accommodation which in 2022-23 increased around tenfold from previous years. We're concerned, and we hope to be able to help!



Remembering our guests

The Night Shelter opened a Memorial Garden for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022, and with the help of our guests planted a rose for each of seven people who had stayed at the Night Shelter or been helped by us and whose lives had since been lost. It has been especially sad this year to see another six names added to their number, all of whom died in the 16 weeks between Christmas and Easter 2023. The life expectancy for rough sleepers in the UK is currently 47 years for men and 43 for women, and the names of these individuals we have known and cared for at the Night Shelter bring this shocking statistic home.

Wherever possible, and if the family would like us to, we try to attend the funerals of our former guests. It has also been our privilege to help arrange the funerals for two of the names recorded, who would otherwise have had only a public health funeral with direct cremation but thanks to the generosity of local clergy were able to have a service for family and friends. Sometimes all we can do is write. But we're told it has meant a lot to a parent who has lost a child, or a young adult who has lost a parent, to have something from the people who knew their loved ones here.

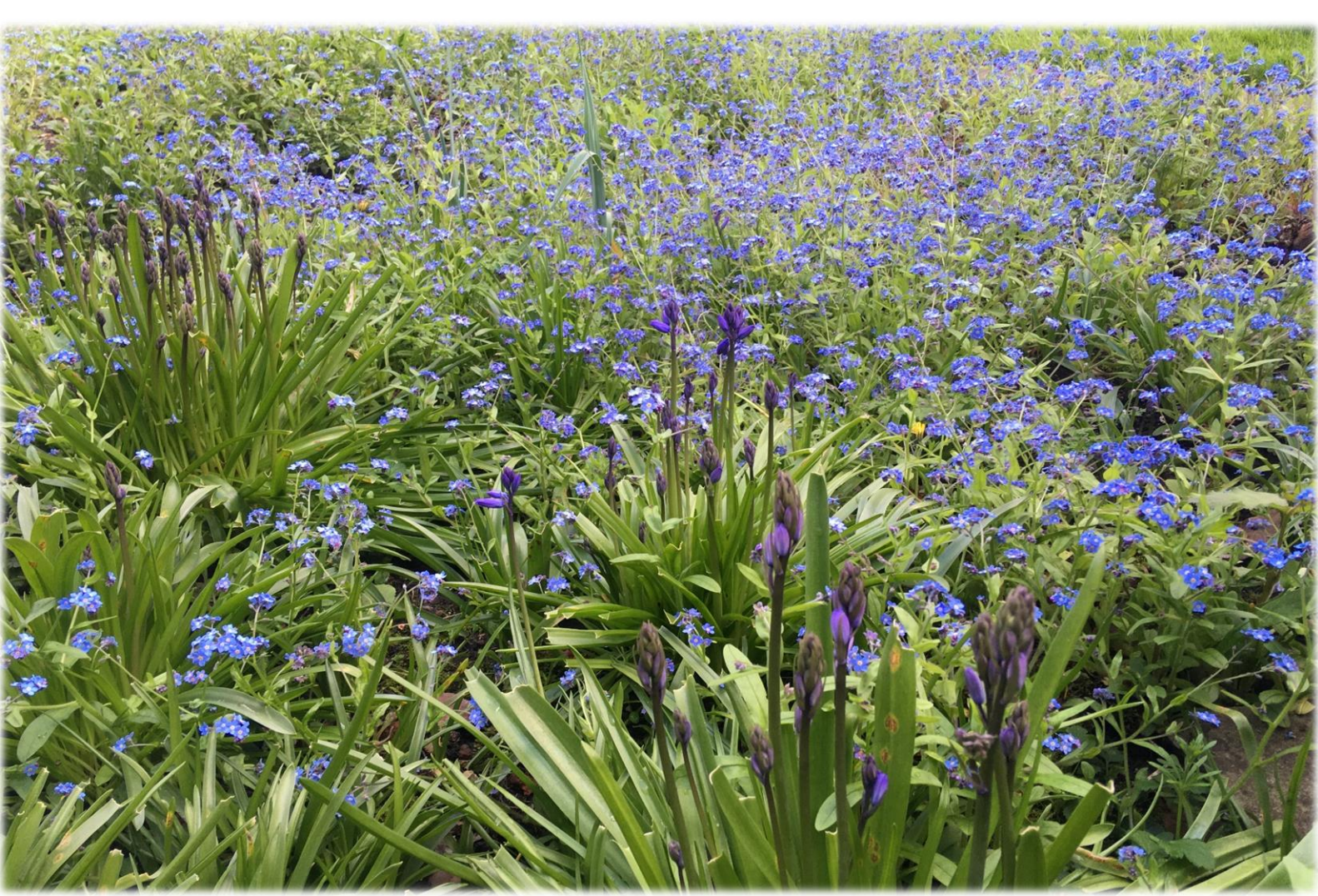
Seven of the names remembered are the child, sibling or partner of another of our guests. We think of them especially and are grateful we could be here in their loss.



Helping us “open the door” ...

The Night Shelter recruits new volunteers at intervals through the year, in September, January and (new for the coming year) after Easter. We invite anyone interested to come to one of our information evenings and hear more about what’s involved, including basic training on safeguarding and working with vulnerable adults, and the chance to meet some of our existing volunteers and ask questions. Our volunteers are aged 18-80 something and a wide representation of our community, we’ve had dentists, teachers, grandparents, students, ex-offenders, decorators, judges, farmers, single parents and (best of all) four former Night Shelter guests. Our annual “thank you” party is a celebration of their generosity and a highlight of the Night Shelter’s year. Please do contact us if you’d like to know more.

The **Friends of the Night Shelter** are our regular monthly benefactors. They give a sum each month – of any amount (there’s no such thing as a wrong size cheque) – and in return receive two newsletters each year, information about any special events, and an invitation to the annual “Thank You” party with our volunteers. We warmly encourage anyone who would like to be a part of the Night Shelter’s future to sign up as a Friend – there’s a link on our website, or you can ask us for a standing order form (contact details on our website). The homeless need their Friends!



With our warmest thanks to ...

8:56 Foundation * All Saints Briston * All Saints Foulden * All Saints Fring * All Saints High Kelling * All Saints Hilgay * All Saints Narborough * All Saints South Lynn * All Saints Tilney * AM Mortgages Ltd * Anne French Memorial Trust * Authors, Books & Cake * Barratt Family Charitable Trust * Bodger's Farm Pottery * Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk * College of West Anglia * Community of All Hallows * Costa Coffee * Dersingham Methodist Church * The Design Partnership * Edmundson Electrical * Ensign Interpreting * Farthing Trust * The Fent Shop * Ferry Lane Social Club * Flux Family Fund * Freebridge Community Housing * Friends of Whitefriars School * Fruit & Veg 2U * The Geoffrey Watling Charity * Grace Community Church * Guy-Raymond Engineering Co Ltd * Huntsman IFS Company * Kennard 2022 Fund * King's Arms Shouldham * King's Lynn Community Choir * King's Lynn Foodbank * King's Lynn Hygiene Bank * King's Lynn Mobility * King's Lynn Nursery School * King's Lynn Rotary * King's Lynn Santa Dash * King's Morris * Krusty Loaf * Lady Hind Trust * The Lord Napier * Lovells Hall * Masonic Charity Foundation * The Mercers Company * The Mortgage Bureau * Norfolk Community Foundation * North Wootton Academy * North Wootton Women's Institute * The One to One Project * Priory Rotary * Prontaprint King's Lynn * Queen Elizabeth Hospital staff team * Reffley Club * Russett House * Ryston Runners * Russet House Hotel * Sainsbury's * Shouldham Carol Singers * Snettisham Spiritualist Church * South Wootton Methodist * Springwood High School * Ss Peter & Paul Watlington * St Andrew Congham * St Andrew's Holt * St Dominic Catholic Church Downham Market * St Faith Gaywood * St James the Great Castle Acre * St John the Baptist Timberhill, Norwich * St Mary Burnham Deepdale * St Mary the Virgin Beeston * St Mary The Virgin Sedgeford * St Mary Holme-next-the-Sea * St Mary West Winch * St Nicholas Blakeney * St Nicholas Dersingham * St Nicholas Friendship Group * St Peter West Lynn * Starbucks * The Talent Fund * TK Maxx and Homesense Foundation * Trundley Design * West Norfolk Chinese Communities * West Norfolk Lodge of Freemasons * Whitefriars School * Your Local Paper Winter Appeal ... *and to many other individuals who have given time, money, food and practical gifts including:*

80 volunteers who between them this year have given nearly 9000 hours of time to caring for and helping our guests;

the **Friends of the Night Shelter**, whose total monthly giving pays the first 10 days' rent for St John's House every month to provide a home for our guests;

and lastly to the many friends known and unknown who continue to follow our news and keep us in their thoughts and prayers.



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