



Report on St Luke's Winter Night Shelter - 2014/15

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This report provides a summary of the Night Shelter project that was hosted at St Luke's church in the parish of Clay Hill during the winter of 2014/15.

1. Background

Clay Hill Parish has a proactive strategy for using the church buildings as much as possible for the benefit of the local community. This includes the community café, a monthly craft fair, the very successful weekly community singing project, and sponsoring a scout group.

When it was proposed a couple of years ago for a Winter Night Shelter project to be started in the borough of Enfield, Clay Hill Parish was keen to be involved. Although there have been schemes in most London boroughs, Enfield had no provision for night shelters. The Christian charity All People All Places (APAP) had been running a winter night shelter scheme with churches in Haringey since 2009, and it was proposed they run a similar scheme in Enfield starting in 2014/15. The aim was to have seven churches in Enfield providing a shelter for one night of the week each for three months during the winter.

For various reasons it was not possible for APAP to get a separate Enfield scheme up and running, so it has been a joint Haringey and Enfield scheme for the 2014/15 winter, with about nine churches involved across the two boroughs. At St Luke's we provided a night shelter for the first six weeks on Friday nights from 2 January to 6 February. Two other churches in Enfield also hosted the night shelter – St Alphege Edmonton for the full three months, and Enfield Baptist Church for the second half of the three month period. In future years, if a separate Enfield scheme is established, it is likely that St Luke's would operate the shelter for three months during the winter.

The shelter was run by volunteers providing food, shelter, warmth and friendship overnight for up to 12 guests. Only guests with low support needs were referred to the shelter by APAP as the project operates with volunteers rather than trained professionals.

2. Volunteers and donations

The hard work of volunteers and the various donations we received made it possible for us to run the shelter, so grateful thanks to all who contributed and were involved. In September 2014 we started asking for volunteers and donations for items such as toiletries, towels, hot water bottles and underwear, as well as funding.

Volunteers

In total we got 54 people who volunteered at the shelter at least once during the six weeks. Many others helped with donations. The volunteers were not just from the congregations of Clay Hill (St Luke's and St John's), but also from other churches in

the area, and friends, local residents and from further afield via Enfield Voluntary Action. It was a great team and the challenge was to ensure everyone had an opportunity to volunteer.

We had a team of volunteers who were responsible for the cooking and they did a brilliant job – it's not easy cooking for 25 people, but everyone was well-fed. With a very diverse group of people, it is difficult to satisfy everyone's tastes, but the guests were very appreciative of the food we gave them.



There were 14 volunteers who cooked meals during the six-week period

There are, of course, significant benefits to volunteering and there are ways of assessing the impact on the guests, the volunteers, the church and the wider community. It's also possible to measure the economic value of the work of volunteers. Volunteering England suggest the simplest method is: *the number of volunteers X the number of hours X average hourly wage* (based on local rates of pay). Without wishing to make it too complicated, I've used the London Living Wage, which is currently £9.15 per hour. I've estimated there were 450 volunteer hours in the six weeks of the shelter, plus another 100 hours for the planning and preparation. With a total of 550 volunteer hours, therefore, the economic value of volunteers' time was at least £5000.

Donations

We had donations of food, towels, underwear, hand heaters, clothing, hot water bottles and toiletries, which the guests appreciated. We also had cash donations and fundraising that helped to cover the running costs. This amounted to about £1230 (including income tax reclaim). We also received a grant from The Old Enfield Charitable Trust – see below. So a big thanks to everyone who made the donations, including Mothers Union, the Friday singing group and many other individuals, it really helped.

We also had help from Holtwhites Bakery who provided us with plenty of bread – so many thanks to Kate at Holtwhites, and one evening we also had a tray of cakes and doughnuts from Greggs, courtesy of one of our volunteers.

Also, through one of the volunteers, we got the whole of Southgate School involved. The volunteer was so enthused by her experience on the first night of the shelter, she wanted to get the school where she works involved. The school had assemblies where homelessness was discussed, and students were encouraged to make donations of food, toiletries, hats and scarves. This was all delivered to us, along

with the evening meals, before our last session on 6 February. About 20 students and teachers came to the shelter in the afternoon for a discussion and they helped make up the beds. APAP passed on their extensive donations to other shelters.



Discussions with students from Southgate School and some of their donations

The Old Enfield Charitable Trust

We were intending to have a shower installed in the disabled toilet for guests but it proved to be too expensive. There were limited cooking facilities in the church, so it was intended that volunteers would prepare and cook about 25 meals (dinner and breakfast for guests and volunteers to eat together) from home and then bring them to church and put them in a hot cupboard - quite a challenge to provide hot meals!

In November we were approached by The Old Enfield Charitable Trust (TOECT) informing us that they could provide funding to support the shelter. They were able to give us up to £2000. In May I provided a report to the Trust informing them how their grant was used, the benefits it provided, and thanking them for their generosity. We were able to make significant improvements to help the guests and volunteers. The £1,887 grant from TOECT paid for the following:

- Purchase and installation of a cooker – so we were able to do the cooking at church rather than from home
- A set of cooking pots, bakeware, kitchen utensils and two rapid-boil kettles – which gave us the capacity to cook all the meals
- Full sets of plates and cutlery – as we only had a limited number and an eclectic mix of crockery and utensils
- Installation of a heater in one of the toilets – so guests could wash in some comfort
- Storage racks and containers – so all the things for the shelter could be properly and safely stored.

Without the cooker it would have been very difficult to provide hot meals. As well as providing benefits for the shelter, all the facilities that the Trust has funded can be used to support and enable other activities in the church.

3. Running Costs of the Shelter

Having operated the shelter for six weeks, we know the actual running costs. The largest cost was for the gas and electricity. For five of the six weeks the heating was kept on overnight, which cost about £120 per night. One night when the weather

wasn't so cold, the heating was turned off for about 5 hours and the energy cost was £80.

The other significant cost was for laundry of the bedsheets, duvet covers, pillow cases and towels. These were service washed at the local laundrette and cost on average £40 per week.

Another cost was for additional insurance for hosting the night shelter in church, which was just under £40 for the six-week period.

There was an offer to volunteers who did the cooking to reimburse them for the food they provided to cover their expenses, but no one requested payment.

4. Outcomes of the Shelter

When we embarked on the night shelter project there were three aims we wanted to achieve. The first priority was, of course, to provide a warm, safe and hospitable environment for our guests and to feed them, and this we did. Over the six weeks of the shelter we had 18 different guests (including 4 women) and they appreciated the hospitality. It was noticeable how quickly they, and indeed the volunteers, were at ease as soon as they arrived. With the Lady Chapel in church we were able to provide a separate sleeping area for women.



A warm bed for the night, and separate sleeping area for female guests

The second aim was to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness. Everyone has pre-conceived views about homelessness and there was some apprehension before the shelter started. The project has enlightened and informed people's opinions and, with the enthusiasm of one of the volunteers, made a whole school aware of homelessness.

The third aim was to get wide community involvement, and this has happened in many ways. There was a broad range of volunteers who brought much to the project, and there was a very strong community spirit. A comment from a volunteer reflects the general mood: *"I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the shift - how wonderful the general spirit was. I'm really looking forward to my next slot"* There was also help from a local charity (TOECT), and local businesses also assisted.

I finish this section by quoting from a book by Sara Miles (*“Take This Bread”*) that perhaps sums up why we at Clay Hill Parish are involved in the Winter Night Shelter project:

“At the heart of Christianity is a power that continues to speak to and transform uswhat I hear is a voice that advocates for the least qualified, least official, least likely It offers food without exception to the worthy and unworthy, the screwed-up and pious, and then commands everyone to do the same. It doesn’t promise to solve or erase suffering but to transform it, pledging that by loving one another, even through pain, we will find more life. And it insists that by opening ourselves to strangers, the despised or frightening we will see more and more of the holy, since, without exception, all people are one body: God’s.....Faith, for me, isn’t an argument, a philosophical ‘proof’, it is a lens, a way of experiencing life, and a willingness to act.”

5. Documentation

During the planning of the night shelter there were various notes and documents produced and distributed or made available to volunteers. They are useful for planning future night shelters and, as well as this report, can be found on the Clay Hill Parish website: <http://www.clayhillparish.org.uk/>

The documents include the following:

- 2014/15 Night Shelter Information Leaflet
- 2014/15 Night Shelter Briefing, 9 October 2014
- Note of Training and Information Session, 6 December 2014
- APAP Volunteer’s Handbook
- Food Health and Safety Instructions
- Notes for cooks
- Night Shelter checklist – evening preparation
- Plan of fire safety equipment and layout

To help with the planning and preparation of the shelter I also produced other documentation, not widely distributed. This included the work programme of all tasks, details of volunteers, volunteer rotas, lists of guests and volunteers for each session.