



BEXLEY WINTER SHELTER ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 01 June 2024 - 31st MAY 2025

Charity Details

Bexley Winter Shelter
c/o New Community Church S E London
24 Station Road
Sidcup, Kent
DA15 7DU

Charity number: 1184243

Trustees

Charles Edward January (Chair) (resigned 29/05/2025)
Alexa Moody
Andrew Altman (appointed 19/12/2024, resigned 19/05/2025)
Catherine Bird
Hannah Louise Vandervennin (appointed 19/12/2024)
Melvyn Alfred French
Michael Fredrick Pethick
Rev Edward Rhys Barlow
Rev Eucharia Ifeoma Asiegbu (resigned 18/12/2024)
Rev Melanie Jemmett (resigned 18/12/2024)
Sean Anthony Knights (Treasurer) (resigned 29/05/2025)
Ursula Jean Ayliffe (appointed 22/04/25)

Activities and objectives

The Bexley Winter Shelter (BWS) is a project run by Bexley churches to help those experiencing homelessness with a connection to the London Borough of Bexley (and sometimes beyond). Set up to provide support during the coldest and most difficult time, the shelter normally runs from January to March each year. Although BWS, at times, works closely with its Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator we are not affiliated with nor funded by the London Borough of Bexley

In an almost repeat of previous seasons, our guests were accommodated in self-contained rooms at two establishments in Bexleyheath, Kent. This was funded by *Year 3* of the *Night Shelter Transformation Fund, Revenue Grant* from the *Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)* as well as donations from individuals and other charities. We again continued our provision of an evening meal set in a communal eating context. At a different venue each night, we were able to provide a meal in an environment where the guest could socialise, be welcomed by our volunteers and meet with our Guest Case Worker.

BWS is not an open shelter; people cannot simply turn up and expect to be provided with accommodation and help. With the continued help of the DLUHC grant, we were still able to engage the services of a Guest Case Worker (GCW) who provided the assessment, support, move-on and after care support that previous guests had experienced.

As usual, the view going into the season was to provide a holistic, loving approach to our guests to enable them to be empowered and experience God's presence and love. God's presence was strong and visible through His work this season. While there were many challenges this time, BWS saw growth and has laid strong foundations for continued development going forward.

Community Code

All guests at the shelter are required to sign-up to our Community Code, which outlines a joint standard of behaviour. Alcohol, drugs and weapons are not permitted on any of the premises and guests may be refused accommodation/entry if they are drunk and unable to sober up or if they are under the influence of drugs. No guests violated the Community Code and it was not necessary, therefore, to withdraw of the invitation to guests.

Achievements and Performance

During the 2025 shelter season

How many people used the night shelter?

The move to providing our guests with self-contained hotel accommodation, together with capacity issues, restricted the maximum number of guests we could help at any one time to ten.

- During the 2025 shelter season 33 guests (2024, 22) used the shelter.
- 25 (2024, 13) guests were male and 8 (2024, 9) were female.
- We had an average of 3 (2024, 5) guests per week.
- 18 (2024, 16) held UK citizenship, 10 were from the European Economic Area (2024, 2) and 5 (2024, 4) were from the rest of the world.
- 18 (2024, 10) were under 35 and 15 (2024, 12) were over 35 years old.
- 7 guests stayed with us for more than 29 nights (2024, 10) and we are no longer supporting any guests with accommodation (2024, 0).
- All guests had a connection with the London Borough of Bexley.
- 5 (2024, 5) appear to have become homeless as a result of family or friends no longer being able to provide accommodation. 1 (2024, 0) came to us because of domestic violence and the rest due to various other reasons.
- 2 (2024,0) had known drug dependency, 3 (2024, 1) known alcohol dependency, 0 (2024 3) had identifiable learning disabilities and 9 (2024, 3) had mental health issue.
- The referral route was 1 (2024,7) guest self-referred, 4 (2024, 5) were from Thames Reach, 7 (2024, 2) were from the police, 20 (2024, 2) were from LB of Bexley and 1 from other services.
- Only 1 guest was in employment (2024. 6).
- 7 (2024, 20) guests had a history of rough sleeping with 26 (2024, 2) having none.

This information was supplied voluntarily by our guests to our GCW or obtained from CHAIN. Unfortunately, BWS is unable to help everyone who comes to us. We can provide help to those who are experiencing homelessness and who have low-medium needs. We may be unable to help for various reasons: for example, poor mental health, drug dependence, or even, unfortunately, just having a pet!

What services did the shelter offer the guests during their stay?

The shelter was open from 3rd January 2025 to 30th March 2025. We did, however, provide accommodation for 8 (2024, 4) guests prior to 3rd January but no (2024, 2) guests were accommodated past the end of the declared season, 30th March 2025. Any stay beyond the end of March (our official closing date) is agreed on an individual basis, with the primary factors being engagement and how close the guest was to finding permanent accommodation. Each guest was accommodated during their stay with us in a self-contained room in B&Bs in Bexleyheath.

New socks and underwear were provided as well as a range of new or second-hand clothes, along with toiletries. Access to the Citizens Advice was arranged as well as medical professionals.

BWS was also able to help guests who obtained accommodation with the supply of certain 'move-on' items like bedding, kitchen & cooking items as well as fridge-freezers.

How the shelter helped people move into more permanent accommodation

Guests were signposted by our GCW, The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator from Bexley and Thames Reach and supported to complete applications for more permanent accommodation. As a result of these interactions:

- 19 (2024, 12) guests are now in positive and stable accommodation,
- 3 (2024, 8) guest is in a positive but unstable accommodation,
- 5 (2024, 2) are in unstable accommodation and,
- Unfortunately, we do not know the outcome of 6 of our guests (2024, 22).
- Our 'success' rate was 84% (2024, 91%).

On occasion, when a guest moves into accommodation, they need certain provision – bedding, utensils, a TV – which BWS is able to provide from a restricted fund. On other occasions, the GCW was able to fund the move-on items from other charities.

What preparations took place for the new shelter season which began in January 2025?

MHCLG recognising the benefits of moving away from the rotating dormitory style operation to permanent single roomed accommodation, offered a three-year grant in a programme called *Night Shelter Transformation Fund*. 2025 saw BWS move into the third and final year of its Revenue Grant which enable us to conclude that three-year plan. However, without Capital and/or a benefactor to supply premises at a peppercorn rent, BWS continued to work on the basis of B&B accommodation. We looked (and are still looking) into Hope into Action, pods, utilising an empty local property and hotel/B&B accommodation. As previously, all options slowly ground to a halt apart from the use of hotel/B&B accommodation. The MHCLG grant provided BWS with sufficient funding to provide hotel/B&B accommodation for up to ten guests at a time, to engage the services of a Guest Case Worker for another year and assist in finding long-term accommodation for homeless men and women.

Regular meetings were scheduled for the season between BWS and London Borough of Bexley (LBB) to discuss referrals, guests, and process. Thames Reach, Housing Justice (HJ) and MHCLG were also involved. These allowed us to address concerns and flag situations early.

The week leading up to the 3rd January was used to secure self-contained rooms for guests at B&Bs in Bexleyheath, refining the referral process with Thames Reach and LBB, and producing and finalising the Referral Pack and New Guest Assessment Packs for BWS. Everything was finished and confirmed by the end of December 2024.

Community Involvement

We again adopted the model of accommodation in a B&B/Hotel with the provision of an evening meal in the premises of three local churches and one community building. The purpose being community, acceptance and friendship, as well as providing a designated venue for the GCW to work with our guests. We aimed to provide evening meals each night of the week and approached our volunteer base and the local churches. In the end we had four venues, all in Bexleyheath: Trinity Baptist Church, St John Vianney, The Salvation Army and the Boys Brigade Hall. This meant that we could provide meals on every evening of the week, although that didn't mean our guests availed themselves of this. There is no compulsion to attend the meals. The guests are, of course, free agents and as such are allowed to choose to *do their own thing*, which many did, so only a limited number of guests attended the meals at any one time.

The multi-church involvement in regards to many of (but not all) the volunteers, venues & Trustees witnessed to the truly ecumenical and community character of Bexley Winter Shelter.

Data on the number of churches involved was not, unfortunately, collected this year (2024, 14), although not every volunteer identifies their church or attends a church, but the number of volunteers was 91 (2024, 64), an increase of 42%. The total number of volunteering time was 2,730 (2024, 2,250) hours. Others also supported us in one way or another, e.g. fundraising, praying for BWS, the guests and associated bodies throughout the season. In addition, Bexley Foodbank provided items like baked beans and soup for our evening meals.

A Thank You event was held in June at St John Vianney church, Bexleyheath where some 25 (2024, 28) people enjoyed the Chair's Report, a short church service followed by afternoon tea. The attendees included BWS Trustees, volunteers and our GCW.

Governance Structure

Trustees

The Charity Trustees manage the affairs of Bexley Winter Shelter, ensuring the activities are in line with the Objectives of the Charity outlined above. Decisions taken by the Trustees throughout the year have taken into account the Charity Commission's Public Benefit guidance.

It is the duty of each Trustee to exercise their powers and to perform their functions as a Trustee in the way they decide in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the Charity.

Eligibility for Trusteeship

- A Trustee must be a natural person.
- A Trustee must be at least 16 years old.
- They must be properly appointed following the procedures and any restrictions in our governing document, with due regards to re-election.
- They must not act as a Trustee if they are disqualified, unless authorised to do so by a waiver from the Commission. The reasons for disqualification are shown in the disqualifying reasons table and include:
 - being bankrupt (undischarged) or having an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA)

- having an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception)
- being on the sex offenders' register

Appointment of Trustees

There should be not less than three nor more than 12 elected Trustees.

Some of the Trustees named within this Report were appointed without an election, the founding members, with newer members being voted in by the serving Trustees. A number of them were sourced from previous volunteers or individuals connected with the Shelter during previous shelter seasons. New Trustees were individuals who expressed an interest in ensuring the work of the Shelter continued and were interviewed by the Chair of the Trustees &/or other Trustees prior to appointment. They were all supplied with the documents recommended by The Charities Commission.

Further details on the appointment of Trustees, their responsibilities and the structure of the Charity can be found in the Constitution of Bexley Winter Shelter.

Signed off by

Catherine Sid.
Interim Chair,
25/2/26.