



Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter



Project Report 2018-19
www.maidstoneshelter.org.uk

Contents

Introduction to MCWS	2
A message from the Chair	3
Our Trustees.....	4
Organisation Structure.....	5
The Shelter Aims and How they were fulfilled this year.....	6-7
The Shelter in numbers.....	8-9
Key differences from previous years.....	10
Our Guests' Stories	11
Our Volunteers and their Stories	12-15
Our Venues.....	16
Views from Venue Leads	17-19
Our Partners.....	20
Corporate Partnerships	21
Donations	22-23
Annual Fundraising Dinner	24
Financial Information.....	25
Thank You	26
Our Funders & Donors.....	27-28

Introduction

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS) has once again brought together churches, church members and volunteers to provide a safe environment for Maidstone's homeless community, throughout the coldest months of the year.

MCWS has now been operational for six winters, providing a hot meal, a bed for the night and a caring ear to the street homeless population of Maidstone. This year, the Shelter was opened for 92 consecutive nights with 929 beds being allocated over the period.



Although there has been a noticeable increase in homelessness in Maidstone over the last few years, Maidstone Borough Council were able to provide temporary accommodation to many of our local homeless community over the winter months this year, following a Government grant, so the guest numbers in the shelters were a little lower than previous winters.



However, this year we still had the support of over 300 both secular and non-secular volunteers, who gave their time, dedication and experience to enable the shelter to open each night and to provide the help and support needed by our guests. We simply could not run the Shelter without the amazing support of our volunteers and Venue Leads, who gave their time so generously.

This winter saw the arrival of a new project team, led by Gwyn McPherson as Project Manager. Gwyn was one of the operational Project Workers last year and had previously been a Venue Lead at the Quakers for 2 years, so she brought much knowledge and experience with her.

Also joining the team were Sonya Okubule, Leigh Vilcans, Nigel Sheeran (until 5th February) & Les Ellis as operational Project Workers. This team were supported by a new office administrator and volunteer co-ordinator, Mandy Fuller.

A Message from the Chair



This year was the sixth year we have operated (five years as a separate registered charity).

Following Rev. Bill Miller stepping down, I took over the position of Chair of the Trustees in March 2018. Although I have been involved in the Shelter in one way or another from the beginning (and even before that at planning meetings) I had not been a Trustee before. The Trustees are from a range of backgrounds and all work as unpaid volunteers throughout the year. I should like to thank them for accepting and welcoming me into the group as the new Chair.

We spent sometime during the year reflecting on what we thought went well and what we needed to improve and we shall be very interested in the feedback as to whether we actually did succeed in improving what we felt we could do better.

This year there were some pressures to change the scope of what we have done previously, but we decided that we should get better rather than risking the effectiveness of the shelter by attempting to expand beyond the resources we have. Our fundamental provision of sustenance, hospitality and overnight accommodation has remained the same. As we operated in parallel with the provision of overnight accommodation by Maidstone Borough Council, this showed that sadly the need for what is done has not diminished.

There are statistics within this report but whilst these are an indicator of what was done, the most important aspect of the Shelter remains the unquantifiable human element.

Not only do we want to provide practical assistance to our guests, but it remains one of the greater successes of the Shelter that our guests, volunteers and paid staff are able to interact with each other in a way which can only be described as inspiring. There are some stories within the Report which will at least give a flavour of what the various people thought about the experiences in the Shelter. It is as always gratifying that all the groups of people involved have come from a variety of backgrounds including those with various religious beliefs and those without any such beliefs. Such fellowship has benefits for all concerned well beyond the Shelter itself and I am proud to be involved in it.

The end of the Shelter is always a time of mixed feelings but we look forward to next year, which we already know will bring more challenges. We shall be again both reviewing this year's Shelter and deciding the best plan for next year in what may well be a very different environment in a number of ways.

Whatever is different next year we shall, as in previous years, need staff, volunteers and funds to operate in 2019/20. It will be nice to see those involved this year returning but also to see new faces. We shall as previously, especially need volunteers to cover the overnight shifts. In the meantime a very big thank you to the individuals who have supported us this year: as members of staff, volunteers, by donations, or by raising funds and to the various organisations who have contributed financially or by providing the venues for the Shelter and for the storage of our equipment.

***Thank you all! Gordon Mackley
Chair of Trustees***

Our Trustees

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter - Trustees



Gordon Mackley - Chairman

Gordon was appointed as Chairman of the Trustees in March 2018. He retired from work in 2016, after a 43 year-long career in railway operational management and transport information systems. He is a Licensed Lay Reader in a Church of England church near Maidstone, He has served as a Street Pastor in Maidstone since the start of the scheme in October 2008 and is currently a Team Leader. He became involved in the Shelter from the first year, serving as a volunteer.



Martin Hinchliffe

Martin has a strong desire to help others less fortunate than himself. He is saddened by regularly seeing the homeless on the streets of Maidstone, London and other cities, and attempts to play his part in supporting and reducing the number of street homeless. He has previously volunteered for Crisis at Christmas in London and has volunteered for six years with MCWS. He has been a Trustee of the charity for 3 years. He has experience in managing operations following a career in engineering and is the lead Trustee for shelter operations.



Wendy Tull

Wendy has over 30 years' experience as a senior Human Resources practitioner and is the lead Trustee for this specialism. She is an active Christian and has good links with local faith-based groups. In addition, Wendy is a Trustee for Maidstone Citizen's Advice Bureau, a role that has particularly raised her interest in support for the homeless in Maidstone.



Kerry Faulkner

Kerry has until very recently been working for a homeless charity and is now studying Mental Health Nursing PgDip. She has worked as a Project Worker for the Shelter in previous years.



Rabi Atiti

Rabi is the founder of Inspire Networks, with over 15 years' experience in business leadership and mentoring. She is passionate about social justice and community engagement. Her passion stems from a lived experience and a drive to build and foster integration in communities. She utilises her experience alongside many others to inspire courage and hope to the most vulnerable in our society.



Rev John Tapper

Rev Canon John is a Chartered Accountant and is the charity's Treasurer. John has assisted the Shelter both as an overnight volunteer, and also collecting items for the guests.



Zofia Grzymala

Zofia has substantial knowledge of the homeless sector and brings this to her role as Trustee. She is currently the Manager of Homeless Care Maidstone Day Centre, which is one of the Shelter's key partners.

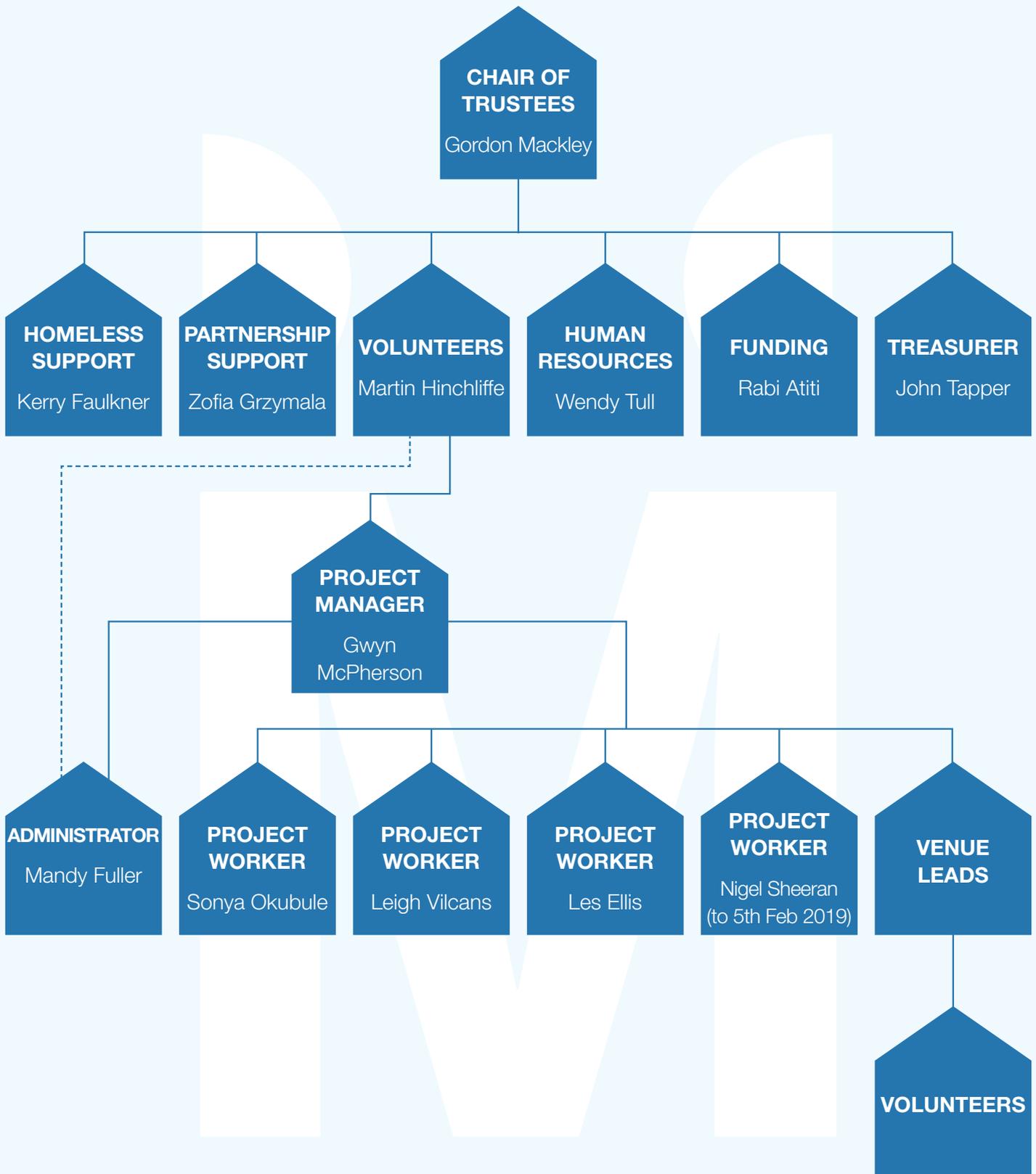
And many thanks go to:



Michelle Peirce

Michelle has volunteered for the Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter for 6 years and was the fundraising Trustee for over 3 years, doing an absolutely amazing job in keeping sufficient funds coming in. She has now handed over this commitment to Rabi (above), but we would like to say a huge thank you to Michelle for her dedication and commitment to MCWS during her time as Fundraising Trustee. Michelle continues to support MCWS as an overnight volunteer.

Organisation Structure 2018-19



The Shelter aims and How they were fulfilled this year

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter was planned on the foundation of four aims:

1

Providing hospitality and overnight shelter for homeless people in the winter months.

Shelter /'ʃeltə/

(noun) A place giving temporary protection from bad weather or danger.

Once again, Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter went way beyond the dictionary definition of shelter, by ensuring our guests were treated as individuals with varying needs, likes and interests.

MCWS met its first aim in many ways thanks to a team of passionate and enthusiastic volunteers and Staff who went above and beyond the call of duty. The Shelter supported 60 homeless people, 48 of whom became overnight guests. MCWS provided a service which included more than just evening hospitality and a bed, with assistance and encouragement that led to access to housing and employment opportunities.



2

Engaging members of churches in Maidstone and other volunteers in building supportive relationships with homeless people in Maidstone, without discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.

Our dedicated church members and volunteers alike extended a warm welcome to our guests. As friendships were made, volunteers humbly, attentively and caringly listened to the hopes and aspirations of our guests.



3

Supporting homeless people to find long-term accommodation.

Collaborating with Maidstone Borough Council, Golding Homes and Maidstone Day Centre, we were able to support our guests with accessing services including health and housing, applying for the right benefits, contacting and reconciling with family.

4

Undertaking such other purposes in relation to the needs of homeless people as the trustees may from time to time determine.

This year marked a closer cooperation between MCWS and Maidstone Borough Council with meetings held to make even better use of the services provided by the shelter. We also continued membership of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and contacted many local employers to seek support for the winter shelter, both financial and physical (volunteers).

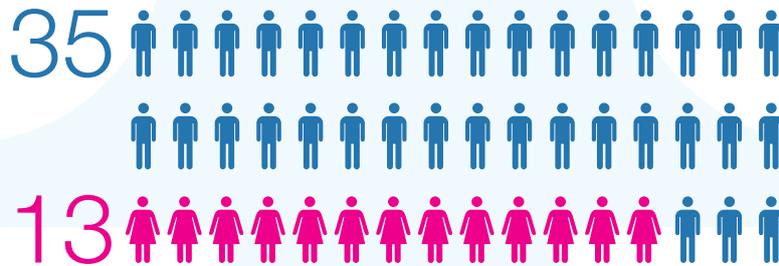
The Shelter in numbers



Number of nights.



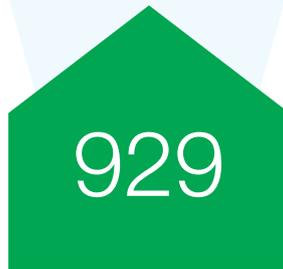
Number of people assessed for a winter shelter bed.



Number of guests booked-in for a bed. Out of 48 guests 26 were regulars.



Number of beds available over the Shelter.



Number of beds allocated over the Shelter.



Number of beds slept in over the Shelter.



Number of guests going into accommodation.



Number of guests only staying for 1-2 nights.



Number of guests returning from previous years.



Guests in MBC Bed & Breakfast accommodation who came for a hot dinner.



Number of long term rough sleepers.



Those who have been homeless for over a year staying in the Shelter for the first time.



Number of EU guests



Number of non-EU guests.



Key differences from Previous Years

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
15 Beds	15 Beds	15 Beds
11 female guests	7 female guests	13 female guests
Number of returning guests from previous year 9	Number of returning guests from previous year 13	Number of returning guests from previous year 3
50 assessed for a winter bed	58 assessed for a winter bed	60 assessed for a winter bed
43 Overnight guests	46 Overnight guests	48 Overnight guests
17 out of 43 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter	14 out of 46 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter	15 out of 48 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter
3 night Christmas Shelter plus 12 week Shelter	13 week Shelter	13 week shelter, including Christmas period
Opened 3 nights for Christmas. Opened 3rd Jan and closed on 28th March	Opened 23rd December and closed on 26th March	Opened on 21st December and closed on 23rd March
5 paid staff involved	5 paid staff	5 paid staff

Our Guests and their Stories

"Good experience – Volunteers very helpful and nice. Lovely food, drinks and a warm bed every night. Company very enjoyable all round. Maidstone Council could provide shelter all year round and increase funding. Alternatively, they might think about at least providing a safe environment for homeless people to pitch their tents – possibly with bathroom facilities. Extremely grateful to all the volunteers for their invaluable help, patience and goodwill. Great job. Much appreciated – sorry it's over."

Judy

"I am very grateful for the service they have provided for us guys and girls. If it wasn't for you I would be on the streets. Many thanks for your help."

Simon

"They are good people and are like family. Thank you for everything. I love you."

Mihai

"Thanks, thanks for winter shelter. It's a really good idea and it's really helpful but should be provided from council. Thanks, thanks."

Jacek

"If it wasn't for this over the past 3 months I really don't know if I'd have made it through the bad weather. Everyone's been helpful and welcoming."

Matthew

"Very grateful for your services. Hopefully it will carry on. All the volunteers have been great!"

Del

"Good people and good to talk to during night shelters. I think it would be better to have long-term night shelters for homeless and other people who don't have a place to stay. I like some games with volunteers because it is good spending time with them. I also think that before the shelter ends they could try to help us with places to stay, somewhere safe, not getting into trouble. I prefer being in a warm place, not outside in the cold because you could get sick or not feel well."

Kristina

Our Volunteers and their Stories

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter would like to thank all of our volunteers for your contribution and support. We truly appreciate the fact that you put your own time aside to help Maidstone's homeless. There is no kinder act than helping someone less fortunate than yourself and our volunteers bring their own uniqueness and energy to the benefit and success of the Shelter.

Volunteering has always been a core value at Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter. Words cannot begin to express how grateful we are for the dedication, care and kind-heartedness of our 303 volunteers who have given so much to ensure that the Shelter opened every night of winter. Our successes this year would not have been possible without you!

303 volunteers gave over 10000 hours of their time!

"Giving up a little bit of free time makes a huge difference to the lives of our homeless guests!"

"It felt good to be able to help with the shelter again this year."



"Great team of volunteers to work with!"

"Once again, this was a rewarding experience!"

What did our volunteers say...?

"It was lovely to see guests from previous years, now in accommodation, but who came to the shelter for company and a hot meal."

"The guests seemed really pleased to have the support of the shelter this winter."

"I've enjoyed the shelter and would like to carry on helping in some way if I can."

"This was a friendly and enjoyable experience for us both."



"It was a pleasure helping people who really needed the support of the shelter!"

Our Volunteers' Stories

"This was my 3rd year volunteering at the Salvation Army winter shelter, working alongside Mark, project workers and volunteers. Once again it was a rewarding experience, knowing my few hours a week helped those so less fortunate than myself. It was also lovely to see some of our guests from previous years now in accommodation, but who continued to come to the shelter for a hot meal."

Chris, Deputy Venue lead

"I enjoyed giving up a little bit of my spare time knowing I was helping other people. I was particularly glad to serve breakfast to the guests when we helped to pack away the shelter one Sunday morning. They all seemed really pleased to be in the shelter and always said 'Hello' and 'Thank you'."

Ethan, Volunteer

"Once again it was a rewarding experience, knowing my few hours a week helped those so less fortunate than myself."



Out of the 6 years the night shelter has been running I have had the privilege to volunteer on 5 of them, four years at the Quakers church and this year at the Methodist Church, Union Street. It's always such an enjoyable experience, meeting new people, both Staff and Clients. Most people are probably only two steps away from being homeless, loss of work, can't pay the rent. I can only imagine what that is like and that probably doesn't come near the reality! So if we can cook some delicious food for our guests and have ordinary chatter round a table, it must be better than out on the streets. After that there is a warm bed, which gives some security for a few weeks at the coldest time of the year. All the guests are always thankful for the hospitality they receive, and if we need a reward that is it.

Doreen, Volunteer

"This was our first time volunteering at the shelter. We found it to be very well organised. Jan and the team and all the other volunteers were so friendly it made a very enjoyable experience for us. We were glad to be able to make our small contribution and hope to return next season."

Tim & Jo, Volunteers



"This was my fourth year of volunteering at MCWS, but my first at Union Street Methodist - it was a fantastic experience. Every year the team of volunteers grows, showing how much the people of Maidstone care that there are people sleeping rough on our streets. The friendliness and the team spirit amongst the volunteers always grows week by week, and I hope that the guests felt welcomed and included in that. We just wanted to give them the best food we could manage to show we care, and chat to them to make them feel normal, not isolated, like pariahs on the street that people go out of their way to avoid. We're all human and any one of us could find ourselves in this position given a twist of fate. I would come after a hard day at work not feeling like I wanted to be there, but in twelve weeks I never left feeling other than honoured to be part of a team making a small but important difference to a few in our home town."

Wendy, Volunteer

"It felt good to be able to help with the shelter again this year and I feel that just setting up the beds and putting sleeping bags/pillows on them is my little contribution to helping. The setting up is a good opportunity for younger ones to make an impact if they want to. It's a great thing to do!"

Lauren, Volunteer

"...honoured to be part of a team making a small but important difference to a few in our home town"



Our venues

Each year it simply would not be possible to open the Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter without the fantastic commitment of our Venue Leads and Volunteers. For a 13-week period, our incredibly amazing volunteers gave their time and commitment to ensure that MCWS opened its doors to the street-homeless population of the town, throughout the coldest weeks of the year.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our host venues for opening your doors and supporting the Shelter for yet another year.

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to highlight the fantastic support from all of our host Venues, Venue Leads and Volunteers. Thank you so much for all you have done to provide food, warmth and shelter to all of our guests this winter.



United Reformed Church
(Christmas period)



Union Street Methodist Church
(Mondays)



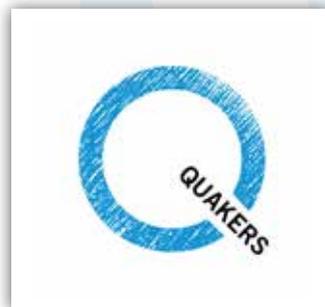
Maidstone Baptist Church
(Tuesdays)



Ringlestone Hall – St Faiths
(Wednesdays)



Maidstone Family Church
(Thursdays)



The Quaker Meeting House
(Fridays)



The Salvation Army
(Saturdays)



Tonbridge Road Methodist Church
(Sundays)

Views from Venue Leads

"Every Tuesday at 6pm, the church premises are transformed to provide a dining room and up to 15 beds. A hot meal cooked at the venue is served, guests and volunteers interact to watch television and play games. Volunteers spend the night awake to ensure everything is well and to chat with any guests who are awake. In the morning while breakfast is served to our guests more volunteers clean, put away beds and sort out sleeping bags for washing, so the church is returned to normal by 8am for the day's activities. 'Laundry Angels' collect the sleeping bags and return them washed ready to do it all again next week. Some 18-20 volunteers are needed every night the shelter operates and another 6 or so doing the laundry. In the 14 hours the shelter is open people who would otherwise be sleeping on the streets are warm, fed and safe for the night. The shelter is operated by volunteers supported by paid staff and without the commitment of those volunteers it wouldn't happen."

**John Gurnett, Venue Lead,
Maidstone Baptist Church**

"Union Street Methodist Church was a new venue for the Shelter this winter. Having helped for the 5 previous years of the Shelter at the Quakers Venue it was exciting to start something new at the church I attend.

I was nervous but didn't need to worry. We had a fabulous group of volunteers from many walks of life and a wide range of ages – some of whom had worked in the shelter in other venues previously and some who were first-timers. We took the Monday night slot and we were very lucky that many from last year's Monday kitchen team at St Luke's decided to join us and on some nights were able to offer the jerk chicken that many guests and volunteers remembered so fondly from St Luke's!



Many guests were in a state of transition this year as Maidstone Council had additional funds to house some of the street homeless. This meant that we saw several of our guests being temporarily accommodated but still coming back for good food and companionship some evenings. It wasn't always easy for them as some had to wait longer than others to find out if it would be their turn next and, inevitably, not everyone was housed before the end of the Shelter.

We did our best to listen to their problems where they wanted to share them and when they didn't to show them companionship and make sure they had a good meal – with the most amazing puddings – and a bed in a warm room each night.

The new team at Union Street was fantastic – nothing was too much trouble for them – and I have made a lot of new friends. I think the Shelter is a huge benefit to both guests and volunteers – we ate together in comradeship each evening and we will be looking out for each other as we go about our lives in the Maidstone area. Hopefully, all our guests will soon have more permanent roofs over their heads."

**Jan Hinchliffe, Venue Lead,
Union Street Methodist Church**

It has been a real privilege co-leading such a committed and hardworking team of volunteers at Ringlestone Church Hall on Wednesday nights as part of our MCWS service this year.

We don't have access to the hall until 6.30pm and so volunteers have worked really hard to erect beds, sort out bedding and set tables in double quick time before our guests arrive at 7.00pm.

Katy and our kitchen volunteers have done an amazing job bringing in fantastic, tasty evening meals, as kitchen facilities have been a bit limited at the hall. Our evening, morning and overnight volunteers have been welcoming and supportive to our guests and playing board games and watching DVDs have been popular activities this year. My own Scrabble and draughts skills have been found a bit wanting!

The guests have comprised a 'core' of our more frequent service users plus some new faces each week. It has been lovely to welcome additional guests for dinner who are now in temporary accommodation and who continue to value the company and a hot meal. Some are familiar faces from last year and it has been good to see them.

Views from Venue Leads

I have been humbled by how supportive some guests have been of each other and of the volunteers on occasions. They have been prepared to roll up their sleeves and help out if we have been a bit short of volunteers for whatever reason. As always I have been impressed by the resilience of many of our guests who, despite adversity and the challenges they face, still express gratitude for all that we do.

Finally big thanks to Gwyn who has been so committed and supportive as Project Manager. Also, many thanks to her Project Workers who have done an amazing job. Special thanks go to Les who stepped in as a Project Worker at the last minute and has been fantastic.

Ringlestone Hall was a new venue for the Winter Shelter this year but hopefully it has been friendly and welcoming - and we hope it's Christmas lights will be twinkling again next year!!!

Sarah Whittaker, Joint Venue Lead, Ringlestone Hall

The Quaker Meeting House is the smallest venue in size but the hearts of our volunteers are large.

Our Volunteers are made up of people from lots of walks of life, Christian and Non-Christian, old and young, men and ladies - and with our change from Wednesday night to Friday night our team was made up of many volunteers returning from previous years and a good number of new volunteers, all of whom moulded into the team.



We tend to be the health and beauty venue, with a hairdresser and pedicurist. Also, an ever- changing evening menu also saw the return of so many now housed old guests who came to eat with us.



Something new for this year was the addition of a cooked breakfast before guests set out for the new day, because the day centre is no longer open on Saturday mornings. So, a whole new breakfast and clean up team was started and my thanks to them.

Our thanks to the Quakers for opening the Meeting House to host the Shelter each week. Well done Team Quaker!

Chris Hutchinson, Venue Lead, The Quaker Meeting House

Firstly, I just want to say a massive thank you to all those who volunteer on a Saturday evening and Sunday morning at The Salvation Army venue and for the many that pray in the background, we cannot forget the team from Jubilee who wash our sleeping bags and one of our Salvation Army Corps members who washes the pillow cases and towels every week. It's these acts of kindness and sacrifice that makes my experience of being a venue lead much more rewarding. This year has been my third year as a venue lead and it was great to have Chris Shaw work alongside me as my deputy for the last three months, Chris did a wonderful job at looking after most of the evening sessions for me, so that I could oversee the project, opening up the venue, then leaving it in safe hands before returning for the morning sessions.

It has been great to welcome new volunteers this year who have worked alongside experienced volunteers, who have been with the project for many years. It's that diverse mix of the new and the regular volunteers that helps to bring many different skills, life experiences and working experience together to cater for those we help – every volunteer has their own individual strengths which have been so valuable to the



shelter. We have had our challenges this year, just like other years – but the team of volunteers have shown once again how caring they are through these difficulties.

As a venue lead, my aim is to get the volunteers to

engage with the guests as much as possible, but of course making sure that we respect our guests' boundaries too. The volunteers were not only engaging with the guests, but they went out of their way to help meet their needs. It has been nice to see guests from previous years join us for meals. But most importantly knowing our guests have been well fed, had plenty of tea/coffee, had an opportunity to relax and play games or watch a DVD and an opportunity to socialise with the volunteers has made these evenings and mornings worthwhile. I am always impressed by the commitment of the volunteers and especially those who do overnights, however we are fully aware that it is a team effort and for that I am grateful to have worked with such a great team.

My thoughts and prayers go out to our guests, as they continue to seek help.

**Mark Heather, Venue Lead,
The Salvation Army.**

Firstly, what a shame that for another year the shelter is finished. It has been an amazing time full of fun, laughter and fellowship. The shelter comes with it's own unique challenges but all of which are overshadowed by the amazing people we meet and great conversations that are had.

As Venue Leads at Maidstone Family Church, we have been very fortunate to have had an amazing team of volunteers



with all kinds of skills from cooking, getting stubborn camp beds set up, presenting clothes donations beautifully for guests to choose what they would like, and tirelessly packing away the morning after. We have been blessed with what may have been the youngest cooks in winter shelter history (one of whom was even too young to stay but came every week to help peel potatoes before guests arrived!) who pulled off some MasterChef-worthy dishes along with the fantastic Rosemary as Lead Cook. This team has taught me that anyone and everyone can make a difference in people's lives.

We had a completely different group of guests this year than previous years and it was great getting to know them each individually, all with unique talents and stories. We have enjoyed playing scrabble and pool, chatting over tea and delicious deserts and even on the odd occasion we were treated to live music performed by our guests!



Thursday nights have definitely been the best night of the week for us, and we cannot wait until next year. Thank you to everyone involved whose hard work makes it all possible.

**Scott and Lydia, Venue Leads,
Maidstone Family Church**

Just a few lines to say a huge thank you to everyone who volunteered at Tonbridge Rd Methodist Church. It was good to have a team who just got on with what needed doing. A huge thank you to Margaret, who over the last couple of years on the shelter has taught me what I need to know in order to take on the venue lead role. Is it too early to say bring on the next shelter?

**Tony, Deputy Venue Lead,
Tonbridge Road Methodist Church**

Our Partners

As in previous years, we have worked alongside a range of local agencies in developing services and partnerships that are so vital to the success of the Shelter and the benefit of our guests.

The needs of our guests are complex and often require a bespoke multi-agency approach. Pivotal to the success of the Shelter is the work of our Project Team in building trust with our guests and providing additional support through our operational partners such as the Maidstone Day Centre, The MBC Street Homeless Outreach Team and Porchlight.

The agencies worked alongside the Shelter to ensure that our Project Team could access their proven expertise in working with the local street-homeless community and that our guests could benefit from their professional support and advice.

We know our guests are particularly grateful to the Day Centre for providing the opportunity to use their shower and laundry facilities as well as food and clothing, without which the daily experience of living on the streets would be all the worse.

Over the past 12 months we continued to build on our successful partnerships with Making A Difference Maidstone (MADM), who regularly came to our aid when we needed 'one-off' items for our guests or with practical help.

The partnerships with Aylesford Priory and Hair Professionals have also continued to thrive as, along with a number of other wonderful people and churches across the town, they laundered our many sleeping bags.

We also worked with:

Trinity Foyer
Kent Police
Kent Probation
Community Mental Health Workers
CGL
Kent County Council
Lily Smith House
MaidSAFE



Corporate Partnerships

Kent based housing association, Golding Homes, actively supported the Winter Shelter this year by providing a number of staff to give overnight support.

Golding homes contacted our Project Manager to ascertain what support they could provide and we were delighted when 6 members of staff offered to volunteer for overnight sessions at the Shelter and 1 staff member volunteered to help with setting up and welcoming the guests into the shelter one evening.



Left to right: Lynn, Gina, Carla, Megan - 4 of the overnight volunteers from Golding Homes

Chloe

"I definitely want to do it again next year and get more involved with services that the community offers people on the streets; it's a complete eye opener. It does make you realise that we're all one really bad month away from being in the same position, and listening to what some of these people have gone through is heart-breaking. I would strongly recommend volunteering to absolutely anyone who is able to"

Frank

"The opportunity that I had to spend an evening to help the team at Maidstone Family Church organised by Maidstone Winter Shelter was eye opening! The dedication of the team and their approach to helping vulnerable homeless people in Maidstone was inspiring to say the least.

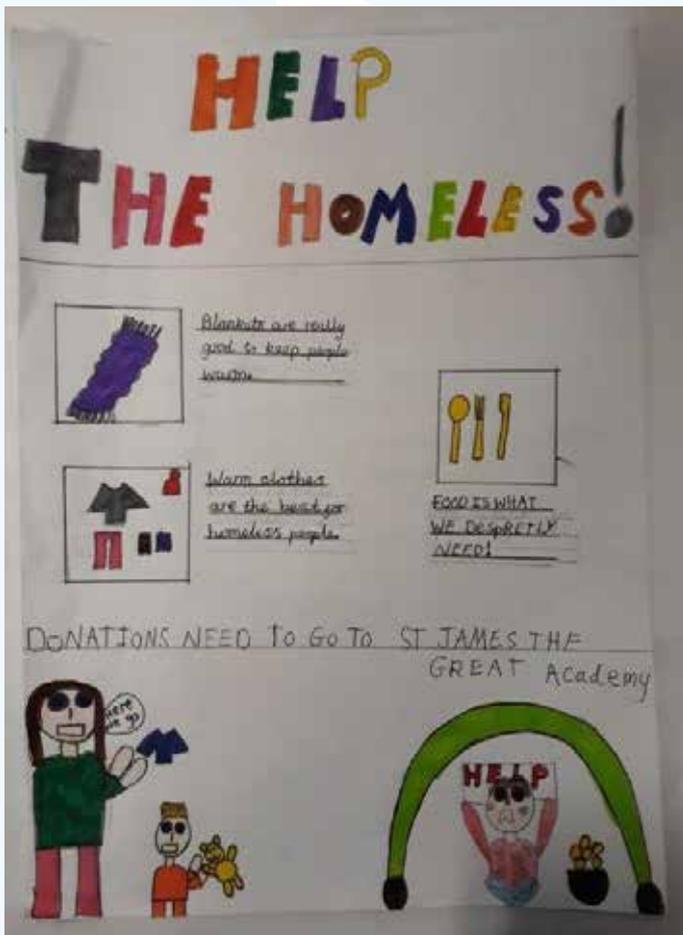
I had several opportunities to talk to individuals who were both young and old having ended up homeless through a series of unfortunate episodes, like getting injured or losing their job, not something that I had considered before.

Although I have helped in serving homeless people food on the streets before, the opportunity to spend time at a table eating, speaking to and listening to how their day had gone was simply enough for them i.e. to acknowledge them!

I would recommend anyone with a few hours to spare to give back in this way. All the best to the team at the Winter Shelter"

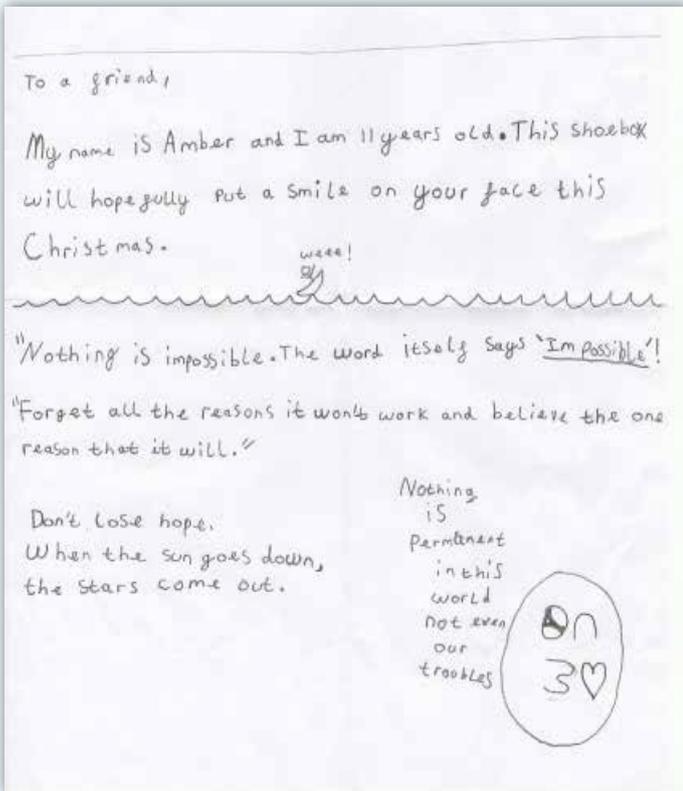
Donations

Last winter we saw many examples of people's compassion and commitment to raising awareness of the issue of homelessness in Maidstone and also in helping MCWS generate funds to run the Shelter for next winter and beyond.



At Christmas we received some thoughtful gifts for our guests, ranging from Christmas chocolate selection boxes and wrapped Shoeboxes containing presents, to complete bags of gifts including toiletries, hats, scarves & gloves and a water bottle! Many of these were instigated by children and young people, who had seen the need in our town and felt compelled to do something to help, even at a very young age!

Some of the shoeboxes contained a thoughtful letter from one of our young donors:



We are very grateful for all the wonderful donations the Shelter receives, including that of sleeping bags and food, which are such a reflection of the incredible spirit of generosity that exists within the Maidstone community. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated to the Winter Shelter, both financially and otherwise. Your donations enable the shelter to keep running each winter and they are all really very much appreciated!

Annual Fundraising Dinner

Thank you to everyone who supported our fundraising dinner at Frédéric Bistro on 9th April and special thanks to Frédéric's themselves for generously donating £10 per head to the Shelter. We raised over £1800 from this event, which is an amazing sum to start our fundraising for the 2019-20 Winter Shelter.

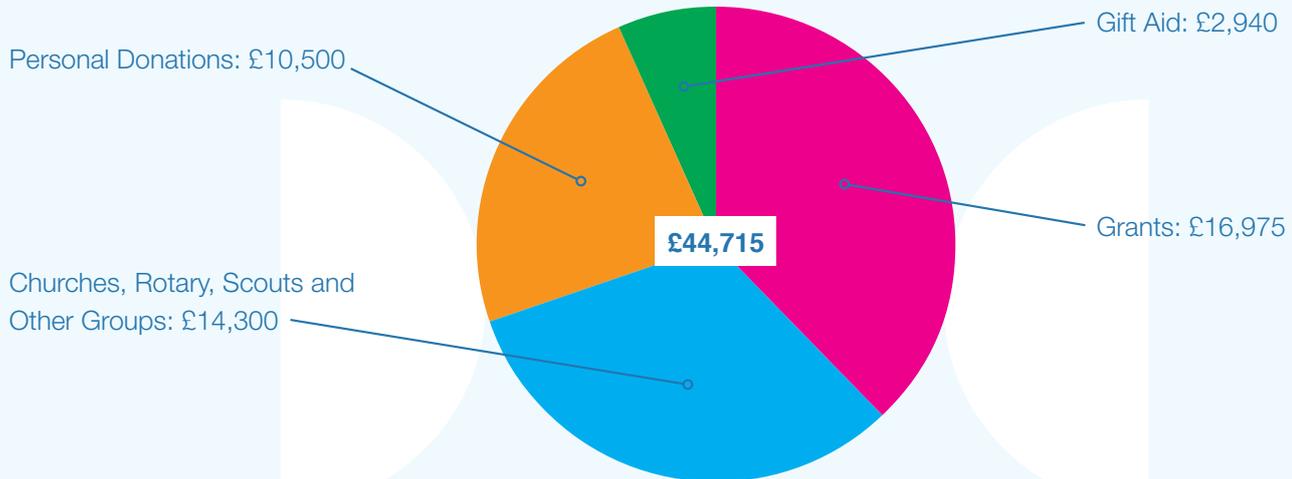


Also, many thanks go to both our former Project Manager, Alexa Kersting-Woods, and her colleague, Lynda Dale, for their organisational skills in arranging this event and organising the raffle for the evening.

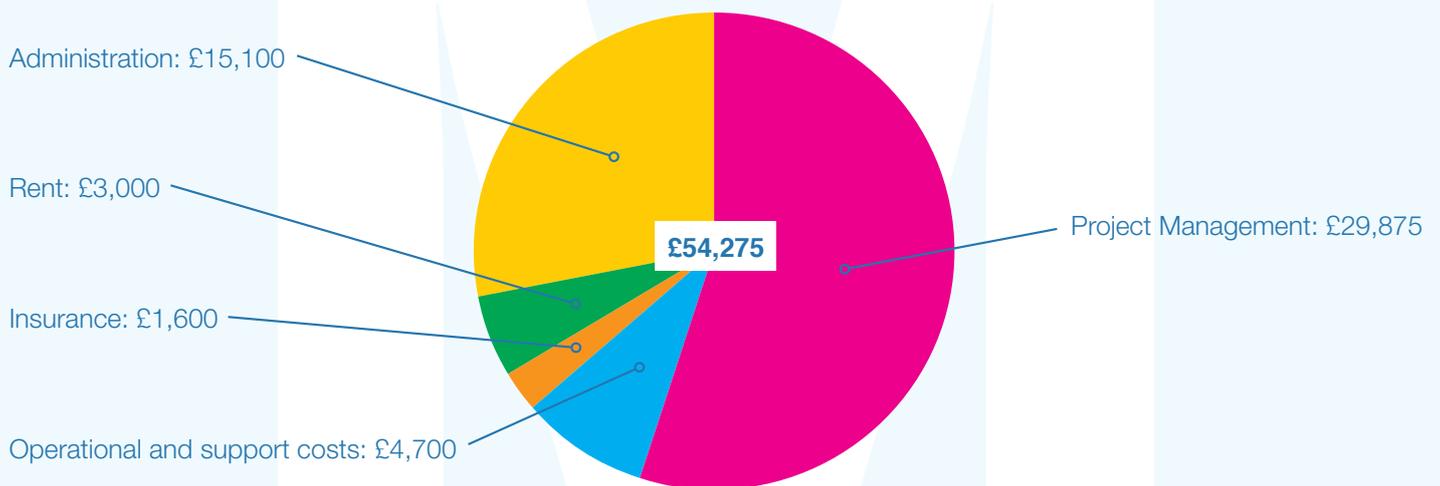


Financial information

Sources of Income



Expenditure



Excess of expenditure over income £9,560

NOTE: The difference between Income and Expenditure was financed from Reserves for this year

Thank you very much...

We do hope that we have thought of everyone who has contributed to the success of the Shelter and we are extremely grateful for your invaluable kindness and commitment.

Our volunteers

At Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter we recognise that our volunteers are at the heart of our work with street homeless people. This year we had more than 300 volunteers making a huge difference to many of our guests. We want to say a big thank you to every single one of you that supported the Shelter. We could not provide this vital service without you.

Our cooks

A huge thank you goes to the many people who have provided meals throughout the winter shelter. At some Venues the meals are cooked on site by our volunteers, but in other places we are reliant on cooked meals that are provided by a number of willing volunteers who then deliver the meals ready for serving. Thank you so much for the time and effort that goes into this preparation. Our guests have been very appreciative of their hot meals every night!

Our trustees

To our Trustees, thank you for your passion, commitment, and leadership! All of our 7 Trustees are volunteers, who generously give their time and a high level of dedication both behind the scenes, and at the forefront by volunteering at various venues during the Shelter.

Our venues

Union Street Methodist Church, Maidstone Baptist Church, Ringlestone Hall (St Faiths), Maidstone Family Church, The Quaker meeting house, The Salvation Army, Tonbridge Road Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Making your buildings available to the Shelter has been a vital and generous contribution.

To all our Venue Leads, Lead Cooks, Ministers of our host venues, we thank you for your whole-hearted support of the Winter Shelter.

Our staff

Our staff team this year consisted of Gwyn McPherson (Project Manager), Sonya Okubule, Leigh Vilcans, Nigel Sheeran (until 5th February) and Les Ellis (Project Workers) plus Mandy Fuller (Administrator and Volunteer Co-Ordinator), who all who went above and beyond the call of duty from start to finish to ensure that the Shelter not only opened but was well-coordinated. Thank you!



Our funders and donors

Allington Baptist Church
 All Saints Church Loose
 Arts Society, The – Mid Kent
 Aylesford Parish Church
 Aylesford Parochial Church Council
 Aylesford School Sports College
 Barth-Haas UK Ltd
 Barty House Nursing Home
 Bearsted Golf Club (the ladies of)
 Bearsted Methodist Church
 Benenden Tennis Tournament
 Boxley Parochial Church Council
 Centrepoint
 Charities Aid Foundation
 Citizens Advice, Maidstone
 Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd
 Cranbrook Rotary Club
 East Borough Primary School
 East Farleigh Farmers' Market
 East Farleigh Parochial Church Council
 Field, Mrs
 Gifted, Maidstone
 Hitch, Mr
 Jaguar Drivers' Club
 Kingswood Christmas Trees
 Larkfield Community Church
 Liberty Church
 Linton Road Congregational Church
 Lucas UK Group
 Maidstone Borough Council – Housing Team

Maidstone Lions Club
 Maidstone Rotary Club
 Maidstone Relief in Need
 Okubule family, The
 Mr & Mrs Phillips
 Porchlight
 Property Admin Ltd
 St Andrew's Church, Barming
 St Faiths PCC
 St Francis Catholic Church
 St Luke's, Maidstone
 St Mark's CE Primary School
 St Margaret's, Barming
 St Martin's Parochial Church Council
 St Michael's Parochial Church Council
 St Paul's Parochial Church Council
 St Peter's Church, Boughton Monchelsea
 St Peter's Church, Bearsted & Good Shepherd, Harrietsham
 St Peter & St Paul's Church, Yalding
 South African Congregation Church
 Staplehurst Free Church
 Tenderden Golf Club
 Tovil Christian Fellowship
 Trevor Jones
 Walnut Tree Pub, Loose
 Wilkins, June
 Williamson, Alison
 Willington Players, The
 Wonderful Foundation, The

... and for many individuals who have given online and in other ways.

Thank you very much...

Those Who Supported In Other Ways

Among those who have supported in other ways are the following:

Alexir Partnership – for donations of Pot Noodles & Pot Pastas

Aylesford Priory for laundering sleeping bags and pillows

Barth-Haas UK Ltd – for their generous donation of raffle prizes

Beatrice & Daisy Morrison (Christmas gift bags)

Carol Hemmings – for her tireless support in so many ways!

Mrs Dimmock – for supplying hygiene kits for homeless women

Downs Mail for publishing a report about MCWS and the need for volunteers

Frederic's Bistro for hosting our fundraising dinner

Hair Professional, who once again assisted us in many ways including the laundering of sleeping bags and provided haircuts

Jubilee Church – for their support with washing sleeping bags throughout the shelter

Kent Messenger for publishing a report about MCWS and the need for overnight volunteers

KMS Professionals – Reverse Advent Calendars

Laundry Angels – for the weekly laundering of sleeping bags, pillowcases and towels

Making A Difference Maidstone (MADM)

Pret Foundation for the donation of office equipment

Mrs Runting – for her kind donation of knitted hats and scarves

Sara Coccia – for the donation of Christmas filled shoeboxes for our guests

St James the Great Academy – for food and clothing donations

St. Margaret's Church, Barming (members of) for laundering sleeping bags, pillow cases & towels

Staplehurst Knit & Natter group for their kind donations of socks plus hand-knitted hats, scarves and gloves

The White Horse Charity, Otham for a large donation of sleeping bags and pillows

Union Street Methodist Church for the use of their premises for Registration purposes and for all of their other help

Yorkshire Building Society – Socktober!



The unknown donors

A HUGE thank you to you all!



**Maidstone
Churches
Winter Shelter**

www.maidstoneshelter.org.uk

01622 296 450

Charity No: 1156735

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