

# Oxford Winter Night Shelter 2023 Season Report

January 3rd – March 31st 2023



Oxford Winter Night Shelter

Charity Number: 1175750

Registered Office: 57C St Clements Street, Oxford OX4 1AG



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### Introduction from Mary Gurr, Chair of Trustees

As human beings we have very distinct needs, and the most fundamental of these are food, shelter, sleep and heat. I am proud that the Oxford Winter Night Shelter has, once again, been able to provide these vital elements to some of the most marginalised in our society.

This report by Emily, manager of the winter night shelter 2023, shows in great detail the work of OWNS. I commend it to you and hope you enjoy reading it.

On behalf of my fellow trustees, I want to thank our volunteers. This band of people willingly gave up their own comfortable beds to ensure our guests had a peaceful night's sleep. They did not just cater to the physical needs of guests, but showed they were valued, they gave them back their dignity.

OWNS is funded by the generosity of donors, the majority of whom are local. We are so very grateful to each of them for their kindness, which is absolutely vital if we are to continue to serve rough sleepers in Oxford.

Our management team have been remarkable, Emily, ably assisted by Andrae Akeh, ensured smooth running night after night. They were helped from the sidelines with advice and encouragement from Russ Hemmings, Manager of The Living Room.

Our guests made it all worthwhile with their examples of resilience and cheerfulness in adversity. I am so pleased that many of them did not return to rough sleeping after a stay with us. I hope they are all doing well.

Rough sleeping continues to be a blight on our society, with at least 50 on the streets of Oxford as I write this. In her report, Emily says that the hope of OWNS is that one day we will no longer be needed. I hope and pray that day comes soon, but in the meantime, with your help, we will continue to offer a welcome to the most needy in our city.

*Mary Gurr*

Chair of Trustees

## **OWNS Season - 2023**

### **Our Vision**

Our vision is to mitigate the harm that sleeping rough does to people's safety and health, especially during the coldest months of the year. We aim to show the love of God to each of our guests through the way we welcome and care for them, although we do not push religion at our guests.

### **Homelessness after the pandemic**

As the pandemic and the governments 'Everyone In' scheme came to an end, rough sleeper numbers began to rise again. In light of the pandemic there has been a drive from government and funders to only open single-occupancy night shelter provision. Although this is more desirable and suitable for the needs of many, without the reality of it materialising we decided that the need for a communal night shelter was still there, in order to prevent as many people as possible from having to sleep rough from January to March.

Ultimately, our hope is that a time will come where OWNS is no longer needed as there will be no rough sleeping in our city. Until then, we hope to continue providing our service and seeking to improve our provision year on year.

We ran the shelter this year from January 3<sup>rd</sup> until March 31<sup>st</sup> which totalled 88 nights. The following report will seek to capture what this looked like.

**531** times a person had a safe nights shelter off the streets

This means there were 531 instances when a person had a nights sleep where they didn't fear:

**Being spat on or being violently or sexually assaulted**

**Being urinated on**

**Having all their things stolen**

**Receiving verbal or physical abuse <sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>Experiences gathered by the *'It's no life at all': Rough Sleepers experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales* (2016) Crisis Research

# 3520

hours given by volunteers to ensure the shelter ran



*'Even the simplest thing like remembering how I like my hot chocolate made or bringing in marshmallows for it, just makes me feel human'* – OWNS Guest

These hours given meant that instead of the experiences faced when sleeping rough, guests could:

**Sleep in safety**

**Have a friendly chat**

**Use a safe, private toilet in the night**

**Have a hot drink and simple hot food made for them**

**Go to bed in fresh linen with a warm, dry sleeping bag and blankets**

**Dry wet clothes in the warmth**

**Talk to a volunteer at any time in the night**

## Reflections from the 2023 season

### Opening the shelter

The shelter had not run in its original format of a 7-day rotating venue model since 2020, pre-pandemic. Despite this our seven venues were very keen to offer their space and provide support by restocking the constant supply of hot drinks, pot noodles, crumpets and toast for guests. Many volunteers who have faithfully served OWNS and the rough sleeper population since 2018 returned to volunteering. Like old friends re-uniting, people reminisced together on times they had met on shifts over 2 years ago and more!

### Guests

The season began with guest numbers higher than usual with referrals from our partner organisation St Mungo's, as well as referrals from The Living Room. These numbers soon fell as guests quickly moved into Oxfordshire County Council's project 'Somewhere Safe to Stay', before moving into permanent accommodation. This was also coupled with long stints of SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) where all rough sleepers were offered provision inside due to freezing conditions. Over February guests numbers increased steadily until we were welcoming between 8-10 guests every night of March.

***'Even if I was offered a hotel room, I would still choose to stay here because of the community and the support' – OWNS guest***



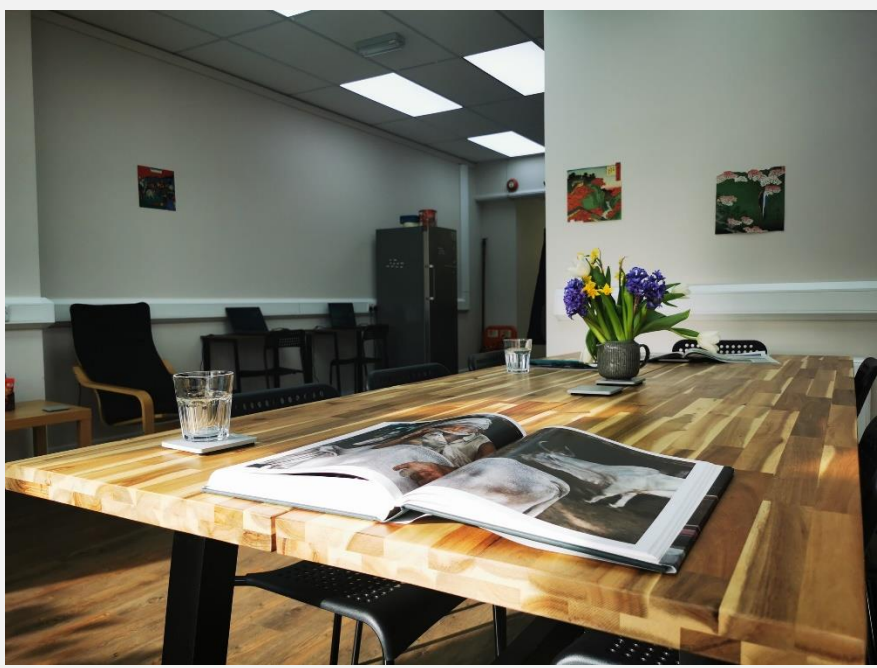
Guest stays varied from 2 to 87 nights and 68% of guests have not returned to rough sleeping since the shelter ended.

***'There was such a strong sense of community this year and that doesn't come from nowhere, it comes from great management and a commitment to knowing each guest and walking with them.'* – OWNS Shift Leader**

60% of guests made use of the Living Room day centre which allowed for the OWNS team to get to know and support guests on a much deeper level than in previous years when the Living Room was not in operation. Of the 40% of guests who did not access the Living Room during the day, the main reason for this was because they were at work.

The Living Room also significantly contributed to the sense of community, mutual support and encouragement, which grew between guests. It also provided a safe space for guests during the day, showers, hot food and drink and facilities to wash clothing. The space was highly valued by all who accessed it, and the only desire that guests expressed was for somewhere to be between 7.30am when the shelter shut, to 9am when the Living Room opened.

*Pictured (right) – The Living Room day Centre*



## Guest snapshots

At OWNS we believe in **People, not Projects** being at the heart of all we do. We recognise that homelessness is by its nature dehumanising and there is no 'typical' homeless person. Each guest is unique with their own journey, personality, struggles and strengths. We wanted to capture some of their stories here:

### Tim's Story

Tim became homeless after a health complication stopped his ability to work and he got evicted. Tim was a cheery and consistent guest of OWNS this year. Always wanting to know the football scores and up for a chat or a laugh.

Tim is working with St Mungo's and Crisis to plan for his long-term accommodation and the OWNS manager gave him a reference in order to apply for future housing options. He has loved the friendliness of all the volunteers and whenever there are homemade cakes, he struggles though with all the names of volunteers.

***Tim stayed for 73 nights before moving into accommodation.***

***Tim has not returned to rough sleeping but has stayed in contact with guests and OWNS staff.***



## Omar's story

Omar was too anxious to join any other communal space when the freezing temperatures of Winter meant that SWEP was activated. However, after meeting another OWNS guest and hearing of the peaceful atmosphere within the shelter, he decided to come and try it. He quickly settled in and stayed with us for the rest of the Season. Omar responded very well to gentleness and kindness, but liked to keep himself to himself.

He took some encouraging to attend The Living Room but once he was there he was won over by easy conversations about allotments, a game of scrabble and a steady stream of cups of coffee.

Omar was unique in that he found the 7-day rotating venue model exciting, whereas others took a while to adjust to the routine of finding a different venue each night.

Omar stayed with us 66 nights and always sought the welfare of his fellow guests above himself.

***When the shelter celebrated his birthday Omar said: 'That is so special and thoughtful, I can't remember the last time I received a birthday card'.***

— The average age at death of homeless people was **46 years** for men, **43 years** for women. This compares to 76 years for men and 81 years for women in the general population.

## Supporting our work

### Volunteering

The Night Shelter is completely reliant on the volunteers who give their time to come and serve, it would be impossible to continue our provision without them.

If you are interested in volunteering you can sign up on our website <https://www.ownsoxford.org.uk/register>. No previous experience is needed as training is provided but all we ask for is a real desire to work alongside us in offering shelter to rough sleepers, and the desire to show compassion to all.

If you are not able to commit to volunteering at the shelter then there are lots of creative ways you may be able to help! If you have an idea or just want to chat to us more about this then please email on [night.shelter.management@ownsoxford.org.uk](mailto:night.shelter.management@ownsoxford.org.uk).

### Financial Giving

All donations to the charity are greatly appreciated. You can donate via our website <https://www.ownsoxford.org.uk/support-us>. Or if you wish to send a cheque, please make it out to 'Oxford Winter Night Shelter' and send it to: *The Secretary OWNS, c/o The Living Room, 57C St Clements Street, Oxford OX4 1AG*

Regular giving by standing order is also very helpful for us as we can plan ahead. If you are a UK taxpayer and give through standing order, you can complete an OWNS Gift Aid declaration online.

## Thanks and acknowledgements

Firstly, we remain beyond thankful for all 7 venues and venue coordinators who gave their spaces in order for OWNS to run this year. They faithfully served in so many ways which were unseen to many, but without them the project could not have run.

This is also true of all our volunteers and shift leaders who gave up their time and energy to make the project what it is.

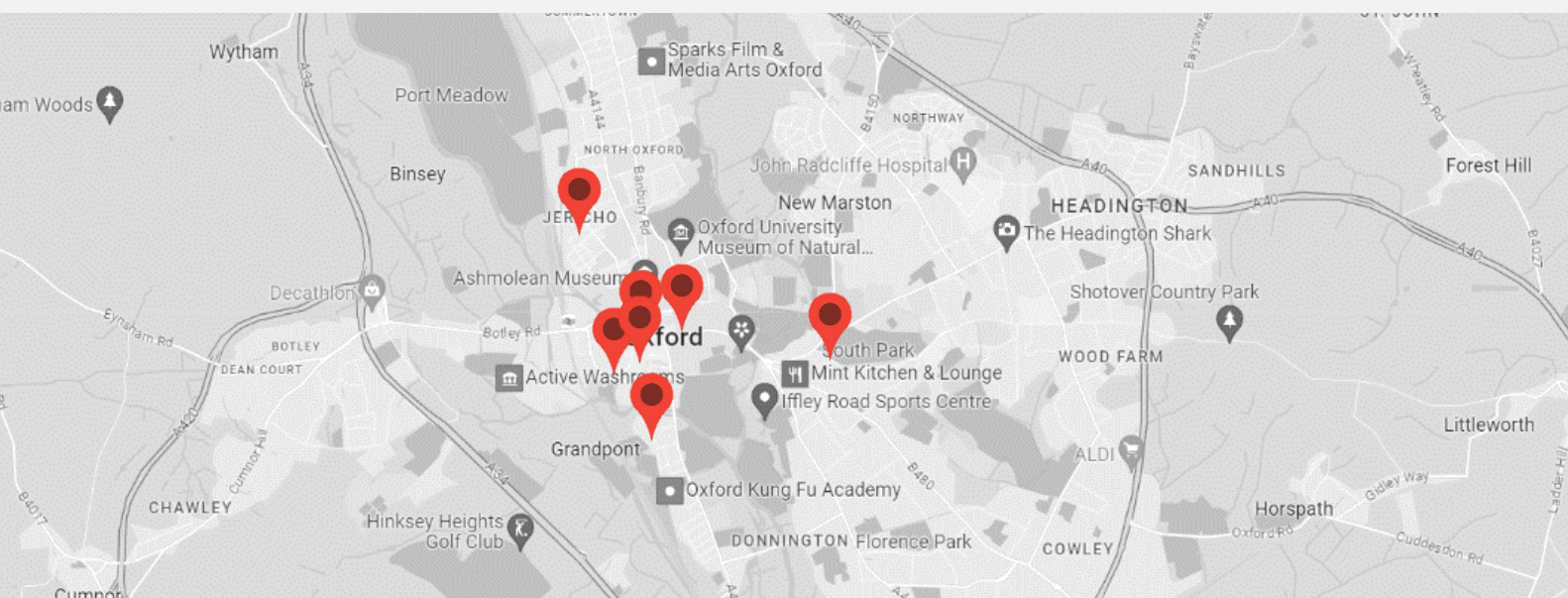
Anyone who donated money or resources towards the project, your kindness has made a huge impact.

St Mungo's who partnered with us to make referrals into the shelter and to all the other charities tirelessly working in the City for the needs of the poor. We are so grateful for what you do.

County Textiles Services who have supported us for a number of years and provided fresh linen and laundry all season.

Finally, and most importantly, to our guests. Each person brought something unique and special to this 2023 season.

From the laughs, the groggy mornings and the huge amounts of crumpets consumed. We will not forget you!





# Sometimes a few receipts can say a thousand words!

\*JS BAG FOR LIFE £0.30  
 \*PENGUIN 8PK 3 @ £0.57  
 YORKSHR TEA BAGS £3.60  
 \*MCV MILK CHOC DIGS £1.50  
 K/POT SPCY CURRY £1.45  
 BATCH SN CHICKEN £1.10  
 POT NOODLE £1.45  
 POT NOODLE £1.45  
 CAD HOT CHOC INST £3.30  
 JS G/RST I/COFFE £3.60  
 10 BALANCE DUE £19.46

TTO W-GRAIN CRUMPETS £1.50  
 JS 20 BROWNIE BITES £2.50  
 CORNFLAKE CLUSTERS £2.50  
 CHOCOLATE MINI ROLLS £2.50  
 5 BALANCE DUE £10.60  
 DEBIT MASTERCARD £10.60

JS S/SKIM MLK 1.136L £1.40  
 \*KIT KAT 4FINGER X4 £1.75  
 GOLD BLEND COFF £6.00  
 3 BALANCE DUE £9.15  
 Debit Mastercard £9.15

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NOODLES £1.45 A  
 INSTANT PASTA £1.15 A  
 POT NOODLE 2 @ £1.25 £2.50 A  
 POT NOODLE 3 @ £1.25 £3.75 A  
 K/POT NOODLE 3 @ £1.25 £3.75 A  
 CEREAL 5 @ £1.40 £7.00 A  
 CEREAL 3 @ £1.40 £4.20 A  
 PORRIDGE POT 2 @ £1.40 £2.80 A

**TOTAL £26.60**  
 MULTIBUY SAVINGS -4.50  
 TOTAL SAVINGS -£0.90  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90 -£0.90  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90 -£0.90  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90 -£0.90

Tesco Gold Instant Coffee 200g £3.15  
 Tesco Semi Skimmed Milk 1.131/2 Pints £1.40  
 Granulated Sugar 1kg £0.95  
 Pot Noodle King Original Curry 114g £1.25  
 Pot Noodle King Chicken & Mushroom 114g £2.50  
 £1.25 each  
 Warburtons Thin Bagels Plain 6 Pack £1.85  
 Warburtons Crumpets 6 Pack £1.00  
 Warburtons Medium Sliced White Bread 400g £1.00

BAG FOR LIFE \*  
 PORRIDGE POT 2 @ £1.40  
 CEREAL 2 @ £1.40  
 CEREAL 2 @ £1.40  
**TOTAL**  
 MULTIBUY SAVINGS  
 TOTAL SAVINGS  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90  
 CC PORRIDGE 2 FOR £1.90  
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 4 BALANCE DUE £5.45  
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 1 Walkers Salt & Vinegar Crisps 45g £1.00  
 1 Tesco Chocolate Party Traybake Each £7.85  
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 \*KIT KAT 4FINGER X4 £1.75  
 GOLD BLEND COFF £6.00  
 2 BALANCE DUE £9.15

Clubcard points earned: 12  
 Clubcard points balance: 135