

BRISTOL CHURCHES WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

St Michael's Church
Mission focus January 2018

The Bristol Churches Winter Night Shelter is a project aiming to offer a safe space to sleep and a hearty meal for homeless guests over the winter months.

The growing problem of homelessness

Recent research by the national housing charity Shelter found that there are 74 rough sleepers in Bristol and 1 in 170 people are homeless across the city. Rough sleeping has more than quadrupled since 2012 and the number of homeless families has tripled. Homelessness services are overstretched with long waiting lists. The fastest growing source of homelessness is eviction from private rented properties

Source: Bristol and Bath Regional Capital report "Homelessness in Bristol" July 2016.

Data sources: Bristol City Council statistics and interviews.

The Church's response

To address the problem of increasing numbers of rough sleepers in Bristol and insufficient beds in shelters, a Night Shelter pilot project was run by churches in January 2017. Seven churches in the city centre took part. Each church took one night per week for 4 weeks, providing 12 bed spaces, a cooked evening meal and breakfast. Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Pentecostal, Salvation Army and non-denominational churches worked together in a demonstration of unity. Over 200 volunteers gave their time to be trained and take part.

"The night shelter made it easy and safe for our members to do something practical to help homeless people – something lots of them had wanted to do but didn't know how". Quote from a hosting church.

The assurance of food and accommodation over the period meant that guests were given stability. Rather than having to focus on finding a bed for the night, they could move their attention to finding longer term accommodation.



The pilot was a success and it will be expanded in 2018

There will be 12 churches hosting overnight guests for 12 weeks: 5 January to 29 March. This will be divided into 2 x 6 week phases with 7 church venues per week.

Who runs the project?

The project is a collaboration between:

- Crisis Centre Ministries – the lead organiser
- Christian Action Bristol, Caring in Bristol, The Julian Trust and several other organisations
- Bristol City Council
- St Mungo's (referring agency)

A Coordinator was appointed in mid-2017: Steve Maslin

Budget 2017-18: £32,700.

St Michael's Church has donated £860 (MAG and collections from Carol services and brass group)

Volunteers are needed

Although St Michael's is not a hosting church for the project, there are opportunities for church members to help as volunteers in other churches.

There are 3 shifts: evening, night, morning.

Volunteers can help in a variety of ways, including setting up beds, welcoming guests, cooking the evening meal, playing games with and talking to the guests, overnight supervision, serving breakfast, clearing away beds and taking the bedding and towels to wash.

The next training session is on **Saturday 20 January** at 9.30 for 10.00 – 12 noon at Ivy Church, St Werburghs, Bristol BS6 5JD

For more details, please contact the project coordinator, Steve Maslin

E-mail: bristolchurcheswinternightshelter@gmail.com Mob: 07507 735798 Website: www.bcwns.org



Prayer points:

Please pray

- For Steve Maslin and others who are organising the project.
- For the 12 churches hosting guests during January to March.
- For plenty of volunteers to help each night.
- For donations to meet the financial needs.
- For the guests - that they would be blessed and encouraged by the hospitality offered by the volunteers and enjoy having a warm, secure place to sleep in the cold winter months.
- For Crisis Centre Ministries and other organisations, working together to help homeless and vulnerable people in Bristol.

A project led by **Crisis Centre Ministries** <https://crisis-centre.org.uk/>

Link person at St Michael's: Rachel Mason