



a bed for the night

Reading Churches Night Shelter

2018 Report



Co-authors

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In association with



Reading Christian Network and Reading Street Pastors





Overview

This was the fourth year of 'A Bed for The Night' running in Reading.

This year we had additional volunteers from the Polish Churches community and volunteers from the wider church community.

2 guests joined us for food on our first night but didn't want to stay over, numbers grew steadily but averaged around 10 per night for most of the project.

This year Providence Chapel agreed for us to use their building on an additional night, as Salvation Army could no longer be involved as they were going to be solely responsible for Severe Weather Emergency Programme (SWEP). St. Laurence hosted at Greyfriars Church due to repair issues with their building.

B4N was extended until Sunday 5th March, working with SWEP, due to extreme weather conditions.

The shelter ran smoothly on the whole, as per the previous three years, with a few incidents which we will touch on later in the Report.

No serious incidents were reported.

We started on Monday 1st January (Bank Holiday) and finished on Sunday 5th March.

Venues and Nights	January	February
Monday	Providence Chapel	
Tuesday	CIRDIC	
Wednesday	LifeSpring Church	
Thursday	St Laurence Church	Carey Baptist Church
Friday	Greyfriars Church	New Hope Church
Saturday	Wesley Methodist Church	All Nations Church
Sunday	Providence Chapel	



Debrief

Shortly after the end of the shelter **volunteers** were invited to a **thank you session** where feedback was sought. Although we were few in number (only 20 people were able to attend) we were still able to get some valuable feedback. There is a whole range of opinions and ideas around rules and timings. It also became evident that the layout of the different venues and the skills sets, of the key team members affects the way in which each venue works.

The following notes are an attempt to summarise and make sense of quite a wide set of opinions and comments.

Guest Files

Like the previous year FAITH only sent round one file, which held the guest register list and the guests' signed agreements. The file containing guests assessments sent to us from St Mungo's was kept at the office with any relevant information passed on to the venue co-ordinators. This was to protect guest confidentiality.

Only information pertinent to the guests' welfare, dietary needs or volunteer safety was given to the Co-ordinators.

Volunteer Registers

The Volunteer Registers were completed sporadically but could be improved going forward with the Venue Co-Ordinator taking responsibility. Keeping the Volunteer attendance enables FAITH to keep an up-to-date record of Volunteers and current emails and contact details. It also enables FAITH to ensure venues are sufficiently manned.

Transportation of Bedding

Very Special Thanks needs to go to **Derek Gee** from Greyfriars Church who helped transport bedding in his own vehicle for us for the whole of January. Quite an undertaking – Thank you.

Thanks also for transporting bedding goes to John from Providence Chapel and Trevor, George, Andy Rowe and Amanda from FAITH.

We allowed one of our guests to have his belongings transported with the beds as his new employment did not want them left onsite. Some other guests also wanted to do this but this definitely needs monitoring as we cannot be held liable for anything that goes missing during transportation or storage at the Venues.

Bedding

This year as both Providence Chapel and Greyfriars Church were used on consecutive nights, it was easier to implement name tags on bags, thus ensuring the guest had the same duvet and pillow each night. With just the linen changing at each venue.

Street Pastors

As in previous years, most nights we had at least one Street Pastor on the door at each Venue. B4N are extremely grateful for this relationship and the support that they provide on a daily basis. Feedback from some Street Pastors is that more information is required about who can attend for dinner as their names would no longer be on the list, FAITH will ensure that this happens going forward. Some felt their role was unnecessary.



St Mungo's

As in previous years the Night Shelter ran with St Mungo's as our "gate-keepers". Being the eyes and ears on the street, they are well placed to know exactly who is in genuine need of a roof and a bed, but also any other health or wellbeing needs. They are also able to determine whether an individual has a local connection (see "Access" p 5 for more on this matter) and therefore, whether they will be able to be found **long term accommodation**.

We have developed an excellent working relationship with St Mungo's over the past three years and it would be difficult to run the shelter without their professional input.

The system stayed the same as the previous three years with St Mungo's sending a list out each afternoon with guest names (and guest assessments) to Sharn, B4N Co-ordinator. This then went in the file and travelled with a member of FAITH Staff to each venue.

This year, we had more non-referred guests than usual turn up at a B4N venue. We had two referred from their home church and ten guests wanting to be included in B4N who had not been referred. FAITH will always take overall responsibility for these guests, but need to be mindful that St Mungo's are unlikely to work with them as they will not have been proven to be rough sleepers.

These are the figures and final report with figures from previous years for comparison.

	2018	2017	2016	2015
No. of nights B4N ran (in c 5 additional days SWEP)	64	58	56	31
Referrals from St Mungo's	28	52	38	26
Rahab Referral	0	1	0	0
Church	2	0	0	0
Self-referral	10			
Number using B4N	34	33	38	22
No. housed (including Hope into Action and FCG's Stepping Stones)	11	17	22	7
Long term Hospital	0	1	0	0
Prison	1	1 ⁽¹⁾	1	1
Family / Friends	0	4	0	2
Waiting List / Homelessness pathway	5	5	4	
Left area	0	2	0	0
Waiting for Rehab	0	1	0	0
Used sporadically / Not engaging	6	4		4
Waiting List / Ongoing no recourse	3	3		
Lost Contact	4			

⁽¹⁾Now in the Salvation Army



Guests

In general, guests were well behaved and courteous and would happily undertake set up/clear-up duties if asked. Several enjoyed coming back for a meal even when housed. We had a greater attendance of non-drug users compared with previous years and also those with mental health problems.

We had two guests who had a car this year and this proved a problem at New Hope (no parking) as one of the guests had a dog which stayed in the car and therefore, he needed his car to be close at hand. He would choose to sleep in his car on those nights.

We had two guests who had properties but couldn't access them, one guest who had been "cuckooed" with people living illegally in it. The other forced out by wife's family but was unsure, as to whether this was legal. Both guests were encouraged to seek advice from Citizen Advice Bureau and Communicare. The Police and several other organisations in Reading were also offering advice and support.

Expectations were managed, especially, when guests are being assessed for housing, encouraged them to stay positive as it can be a while from initial assessment to actually being housed.

Guests who turned up who were not on the list were assessed by the Co-ordinator/FAITH staff and then either allowed to stay on the proviso that they engaged with St Mungo's in the morning or offered sleeping bag, duvets and pillows if they could not be allowed in. Where this happened during the SWEP period of 1- 5 March they were referred to Salvation Army at Willow House.

After discovery, one guest was advised not to carry belongings of other guests in his car and to watch his boundaries.

Several guests requested Wi-Fi, not all venues had this but where possible a code was given to the guests.

Percentage Use of B4N	
Total Number of nights guests attended including self-referrals	517
Maximum nights available (Nights x Bed Spaces)	64 x 18 = 1152
Total usage	45%

Behaviour/ Incidents

One guest was banned for using drugs on premises. One guest excluded for violent and aggressive behaviour towards staff. There were drug and smoking use on premises but unless caught in the act it becomes very difficult to exclude any individual.

Two guest mobile phones stolen while at the Night Shelter. Guests were reminded to be vigilant unfortunately; we could not prove who had done this as the CCTV was not working in one of the venues.

For the first time we had an intimate relationship develop between guests, as they wanted to spend time with each other alone. The two guests ended up getting locked in one of the venues. Only being discovered when they rang B4N at 3.30pm the same day. **GOING FORWARD CO-ORDINATORS TO CHECK VENUES TO ENSURE THAT ALL GUESTS HAVE LEFT THE BUILDING AND BE AWARE OF WHERE ALL GUESTS ARE AT ALL TIMES.**

This then got more complicated as the guy in the relationship struck up a further relationship with a male guest. This caused unrest between them all. We can't train for this but just be aware going forward.

Found blood and needle caps in toilets, toilets being blocked with needles and other "non-toilet" waste material. Expensive to unblock and prevented the use of the shower for guests with B4N as the Venue couldn't risk getting it blocked again.



Severe Weather Emergency Programme (SWEP)

Due to the extreme weather condition forecast for 1 – 5 March 2018 it was decided to extend B4N and to work alongside the Salvation Army. B4N only continued for the guests who were accessing as of the 28 February but extended it for five additional guests. Many thanks to all those who volunteered at Carey Baptist, Greyfriars Church, All Nations and LifeSpring Church, who stepped up to provide the additional cover at very short notice.

Police Visits

There were no calls to the Police this year. We were made aware from St Mungo's that a housed guest was wanted by the police. Neither the guest nor the police showed.

Two people came in from the Ark to notify us of a missing person. They were concerned for his safety. We were provided with a photo. When the guests came in they recognised him immediately and we were able to advise 101 of the location of where they had seen him that day.

One of our guests went to collect his bike from outside Metro Bank after dinner but the three locks had been cut and the bike stolen. The Police were called to report that it had been stolen. They suggested contacting RBC and Metro Bank for CCTV. He was very angry and frustrated and refused to return to B4N after that.

Community Mental Health Team

Although there seemed an increased number of guests who were affected by mental health issues, we did not need to call on the CMHT.

HOLT Nurses

HOLT Nurses attended B4N in the morning sessions several times. Guests felt relaxed and would approach the Nurses if they needed medical assistance or advice. **Going forward it would benefit the Venues if they knew when the Nurses would be attending.**

Medical Issues / Ambulances

An ambulance was called to B4N on two separate occasions:

1. One of our guests suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and where he had been rough sleeping his condition had worsened. The guest called the ambulance on two mornings as was struggling to breathe. Oxygen was administered and tests completed.
2. One of our guests had been admitted to hospital for an abscess was kept in for two nights but when discharged was in extreme pain. When trying to get the guest re-admitted was advised the only route back in was A&E. Was advised to give her Paracetamol and Ibuprofen. Called an ambulance on two separate evenings for the pain and they would not attend, again was advised to give her Paracetamol and Ibuprofen. Later different antibiotics were prescribed from the walk in clinic.

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen were added to the first aid kit in view of point 2 and then was noted on the daily venue report sheet if it was needed by a guest for routine ailments.

When one of our guests broke his arm and cut his head offsite, he required additional help accessing his ongoing medication.



Access to B4N

Much discussion has occurred around the sensitive issue of 'Local Connection' as it obviously excludes rough sleepers who are from elsewhere. As Director of FAITH, Malcolm is very conscious of the desirability, for the sake of the whole Church in the town, of maintaining good relations with **Reading Borough Council**. It is a central part of the ethos of **Reading Christian Network** to work with and not against RBC. We currently have a very good reputation with them for co-operation and delivering a **safe** and **effective** Night Shelter, which they desire to see, continue. It is appropriate to try to explain why they apply **local connection** to housing rough sleepers.

Homelessness is a **national issue** and the numbers of rough sleepers is **increasing** throughout the United Kingdom. Each local authority has responsibility to house anyone from their town or city that is homeless who has been there for at least five years or have historic family connections. With tightened budgets councils everywhere are applying the rule. Reading has a particular problem for a number of reasons. First we are a very wealthy town which will attract those looking to beg and support their drug habit. Second as, we state on our website, "**Reading is full**"! We even have single mums living in B & B's in Slough because there is nowhere for them here. Why then should RBC try to help people who have come here from elsewhere (refugees an obvious exception).

Two church leaders have suggested that we **reserve** a certain number of beds that B4N ourselves control access to. Our capacity is currently restricted by the size of the smallest venue to 15 males and 3 females. FAITH feel that we could easily be seen as showing favouritism to random people rather than sticking to a consistent policy the end objective of which is to house people.

The Good Bits

The success of B4N again speaks for itself with number of our guests being housed and engaging with services.

Quotes from Volunteers:

Christians working together from all different churches.

Being asked to pray for a guest who wanted rid of his smoking addiction

I was really impressed by the courtesy and good behaviour of our guests- the outcasts of society

Great to see housed guests coming back for a meal and conversation

It is so affirming when the value of prayer is integral to the project

Seeing someone housed

A few guests coming to church

The guests helping at the venues and also helping at other organisations

Privilege to serve

It was pleasing to see the guests developing a routine in their life. Their appearance and general wellbeing improved. This will give them some core skills mentally. When it come to the routine of having a home, progressing into work and overcoming problems.

Quotes from Guests

"Just to let you know I have settled in OK and everything is going well. I'd like to join a church if you can let me know anywhere please. I also just wanted to take the time to say thank you to all the B4N workers, you are all amazing people and next year I want to put my name forward to volunteer"

*An encouragement from a guest who accessed B4N in 2017, he was using the drop in at Providence Chapel and had a long chat with Sharn stating that he had served time but was now free from his heroin addiction, his girlfriend had waited for him during his prison sentence but he was housed and was still grateful for the love that he had been shown. **You never know the seed that you are planting at the time, do not be discouraged as you do not know when it will bear fruit.***



Comments from Curtis, St Mungo's

Attendance- Once people started staying, they tended to consistently use B4N, and that consistency might be the first regular pattern of behaviour or sleep an individual has stuck to for a while, the fact that they were made to feel so welcome by you your organisation and volunteers is massive.

Outcomes- Numerous verified rough sleepers who accessed B4N have through its duration were housed and have maintained their accommodation, I cannot think of a more obvious successful barometer than providing a platform for people to alleviate their homelessness. I think that the feedback you give us is a crucial conduit between our client's engagement with B4N, and the council, so when clients abide by the agreement and attend consistently, we feed this back to RBC and it has real results!

Flexibility and team effort- The length of time B4N is open for and the effort and commitment that takes is already incredible, but your extension of B4N to cover the final weekend and allowing in people who needed SWEP, was beyond brilliant and literally most probably saved lives- we as a team cannot thank you enough, what you did was beyond the beyond!

Thoughts/feedback

Letting in people who St Mungo's have not referred in- We totally appreciate that you are in charge of B4N, you are running B4N and you have the difficult job of making decisions throughout the process that keep those who are within your duty of care safe. I think concerns with letting in people who we have not referred in is that, it could be if we reach capacity, denying a bed space to a verified rough sleeper in favour of someone who is perhaps stating to your volunteers that they are rough sleeping, but having potentially never been found by us. Another concern with letting in people who we have not verified will also be that they have not been risk assessed by us and so they are an unknown quantity which could put them, your volunteers and other clients at risk? One other way it can be more directly difficult is in the example of a young man who did not meet the criteria of B4N, who had turned down repeated offers of an emergency bed, but who was then allowed into B4N despite lacking a referral from us. We then had the difficult/damaging job of telling him he would be removed from B4N and a bed would be made available for SWEP which damaged our working relationship with him.

Mixed messages- There were several instances where members of St Mungo's were publically and vocally asked by B4N staff if they were going to work with unverified entrants to B4N who we had simply never found rough sleeping in this period. We are clear about our remit regarding the fact that we can only work with and support clients who we have verified as rough sleepers, who reach us by a myriad of referral sources and our frequent outreach shifts. We do not have the capacity or remit to work with people who have 'said' they are rough sleeping but not been found. I think it would be to the good of managing people's expectations if that is a consistent message bore out by both us and B4N staff/volunteers.

A variety of mixed messages in boundaries between B4N staff/volunteers/St Mungo's team. With a particular client accessing B4N, St Mungo's staff faced repeated boundary pushing regarding physical contact/hugs

B4N gets better and better every year then that only benefits our clients who get so much out of it when we all get it so right!



Special Thanks

Blake Morgan who not only volunteer for B4N but have nominated us for their Charity of the Year for the third year in a row.

Narrinder Taggar and her colleagues at Shakespeare Martineau in donating the hoodies for the staff at FAITH.

Franco Manca who donated 35 pizzas to Greyfriars Church on Friday 2 March, during the SWEP extension.

Reading Golf Club who donated and dropped off (despite the snow) a very large steak pie on Thursday 1 March for Carey Baptist Church during the SWEP extension.

B4N Improvements

Drug training – could this be done earlier in the year?

Bigger van!

Greater awareness of B4N for Reading rough sleepers

Signpost to other services



Proposals / Changes

Steering Group

Sally Leonard Sharn Harvey
Linda Flintoff Malcolm Peirce
John Davies Billy Fleming
Fr David Harris

Met once during the duration of B4N it was decided that it was not necessary for any further meetings.

“Authority”

It is vital that **Co-ordinators** and **overnight volunteers** know that they have the **right** to give a guest a formal warning or exclusion if their behaviour is in breach of the **Community Code**. They need to also know that if they consider the violation to be serious enough they have the **authority** to evict a guest and furthermore, their decision will be upheld by B4N right across all venues. (Warnings should be relayed to the B4N Co-ordinator and preferably Malcolm, we would then want to back you up the next evening with a **reminder** to the guest).

Training

It is unanimously agreed that training requires review. We were very conscious this year that volunteers coming back for the **third year** really did not need the full training once again and did introduce a **two tier system**. But, even that felt too much to some. We actually ran **8 training sessions** this year. We are actively planning a different approach for next year. However, even **basic training** of any new volunteer who will interact with guests needs to be around **two hours** to be comprehensive.

- **Co-ordinators and overnight volunteers** clearly require a more intensive and detailed training, definitely enough to give them confidence to fulfil their role. First Aid is vital, probably also drug awareness. (There needs to be a **Co-ordinator** and a **deputy** trained to the same level). **DBS to be obtained for all overnights and Co-ordinators.**
- Where Co-ordinators do not stay through the **night** or return in the morning, there needs to be a separate **morning Co-ordinator** appointed and properly trained so as to engage with St Mungo’s and the FAITH member of staff. Passing information from the night before needs looking at.
- We will consider offering **optional training** evenings in specialisms notably drugs but possibly things like conflict resolution; causes of homelessness.
- Training for **hospitality teams, kitchen staff, set up and set down volunteers** clearly needs to be full in the first year but possibly only a matter of signing an update sheet in subsequent years.
- **Co-ordinators** could be given responsibility for training their own teams, but this might get tricky where volunteers from elsewhere are allocated to a church.
- **Earlier notice** needs to be given for training dates.

Prayer

It was noted by a couple of people that prayer had slipped off the agenda at the venue. It is vital that the team have an update session before opening of an evening and that time should include prayer. We would like to raise the profile of prayer surrounding B4N. That would ideally be, as two venues already do, much in line with



'Prayer Pastors', to have a group of people praying in a separate room on site. This could be for as long as possible but certainly for an hour or so through the evening.

Bedding

The system of numbered bags for bedding didn't take off this year but we would like to ensure that it does happen next year. Someone suggested the use of **sleeping bags** for each guest instead of bedding? We are open to discussion on this but at the moment feel that proper bedding is a more homely option.

Other possible developments

Befriending

Follow on befriending came up last year as a desirable development, but few people contacted us to move it forward.

Daytime activities – what guests do during the day, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays is something that could be looked at - encourage guests to attend Church on Sundays? (On a Sunday whichever Church is hosting have an area for coffee, more relaxed, see if want to go to service?)

More external agency involvement? – Mental Health? **IRIS** did come last year and were invited this year to come in for drug advice.

Story sharing we have always encouraged feedback around positive stories as well as issues. More sharing of such stories between venues might assist feeling more connected. Perhaps each co-ordinator could email on to the next night?

Consistency

All venues need to stick to NOT allowing guests in after 10pm.

Any guest wanting to leave a venue during the night should be given their bag and told they will not be allowed back in.

FAITH need to be clearer about venue "Times", e.g. "breakfast will be served between ...", "beds will be collected at", "dinner is served between ...", "guests must be up by", "guests must leave the building by ..."

Other matters

FAITH staff should only be present at venues in a **supporting/advisory role**. They should be **referred to** but not **deferred to**. Church co-ordinators are responsible for their venues.

Encourage team members, especially co-ordinators, to **visit** other venues to see how others work.

Volunteers should serve food to the guests at their tables, eat with them and actively discourage taking food to beds.

Involve guests more, e.g. serving food to tables, stripping own beds if they are willing (needle safety!)

Work to avoid mentality of '**us** and **them**'.

Sharn Harvey & Malcolm Peirce