



a bed for the night

Reading Churches Winter Night Shelter

2020 Report (Short)



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In association with



(Reading Christian Network) and Reading Street Pastors



Reading Borough Council and St Mungo's

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B4N 2020 Overview

This was the sixth year of running 'A Bed for The Night' (B4N), Reading Churches Winter Night Shelter.

The **B4N night shelter planned to open for 12 weeks** this year. As a result of the lockdown put in place by the Government in response to COVID-19, **B4N closed 3 days earlier than planned**.

The night shelter opened on Friday 3 January and the last night was Monday 23 March 2020. As had been the case last year, FAITH received funding from the government to implement B4N for a third month until the end of March 2020. The funding also covered payment for overnight supervisors. In addition, FAITH received a grant from Housing Justice which meant we could employ another member of staff to assist the B4N Co-ordinator with support plans and one-to-one support sessions for our guests.

In total 12 churches hosted B4N 2020. 1 new church hosted B4N for the first time - **English Martyrs Catholic Church**. Salvation Army continued to provide emergency beds under the Severe Weather Emergency Programme (SWEP) and 10 'sit up' beds used to provide shelter to rough sleepers in Reading.

Venues and Nights	January	February	March
Monday	Abbey Baptist Church		
Tuesday	CiRDIC		
Wednesday	LifeSpring Church		
Thursday	St Laurence Church	Carey Baptist Church	Argyle Community Church
Friday	Greyfriars Church	English Martyrs Church	New Hope Church
Saturday	Wesley Methodist Church	All Nations Church	
Sunday	Wycliffe Baptist Church		

As in previous years, the main referrer of rough sleepers to B4N was the **St Mungos** Rough Sleeper Outreach Service. We **also took referrals from Reading Borough Council (RBC), Launchpad** and the **NHS Liaison and Diversion** service, as well as rough sleepers who self-referred and were known to FAITH from our **ReadiStreet** outreach. **Referrals were not limited to those with local connection only.**

Of the 50 guests referred, **37 guests stayed at B4N in 2020.**

We averaged 19 guests per night over the course of B4N 2020. This compares to an average of 16 guests per night during B4N 2019. The maximum number of guests to stay on one night was 26. **We provided a total of 1,552 bed spaces to our guests this year**, compared to 1,310 last year.

At the time of writing this report, **we are aware of 4 guests housed with their own tenancy/licence agreements. 1 guest was successfully relocated and 1 guest is making fantastic progress in a residential rehab. 23 guests are currently being housed temporarily in B&B accommodation as part of Reading Borough Council's response to COVID-19 for rough sleepers.** None of our guests are known to be rough sleeping at present. However, once the temporary accommodation in response to COVID-19 is withdrawn, many guests will still be in need of housing.

B4N 2020 ran smoothly on the whole with no serious incidents. COVID-19 began to impact B4N from the last week in February when we asked volunteers to stay away who had recently travelled. Volunteers over 70, those with pre-existing medical conditions or any symptoms were also asked not to attend. We managed to keep the night shelter open with reduced volunteer teams and implementing safety precautions in line with government guidelines and advice from Public Health England. This meant we could continue to provide food and shelter for our guests until the government announced lockdown. At this point emergency housing provision became available for our remaining guests from RBC. There were no cases of COVID-19 amongst our guests and we are also not aware of any of our volunteers contracting COVID-19 during the night shelter.

During B4N 2020, we were re-accredited by Housing Justice who provide the Quality Mark for night shelters. We are very proud to have been re-accredited as 'EXCELLENT'.





B4N 2020 Review

Volunteers

Over 350 volunteers helped us to run the B4N 2020 project; we had over 125 new volunteers and around 225 volunteers who had taken part in a previous year. We are so grateful for the commitment and dedication of the amazing volunteers we have – without them B4N would not be possible.

Overnight supervisors were appointed again this year to manage the team of overnight volunteers and ensure someone was awake at all times. This was a paid role for 10 hours from 10pm to 8am.

Volunteer Training

Four training sessions for new volunteers were held in November 2019 and December 2019.

This year we also ran four shorter one hour re-fresher training session for volunteers with 2+ years' experience. The refresher training sessions were, however, not very well attended with only 25 volunteers taking part. We will review again the training requirements for existing volunteers for next year's night shelter.

Volunteer Teams

As in previous years, each venue had teams of volunteers to help with setting up beds, cooking, evening hosting, overnights, morning hosting and breakfast.

Reading Street Pastors

On the majority of nights we had at least one Street Pastor on the door at each venue. B4N are extremely grateful for this relationship and the invaluable support that they provide on a daily basis at B4N.

COVID-19 Impact on B4N

After the first reported cases of COVID-19 in the UK in February 2020, B4N operated with a reduced number of volunteers due to the risks of the virus. We followed guidance issued by Government, NHS and Public Health England. In the last week of February, volunteers who had recently travelled to countries/regions where there had been an outbreak of the virus were asked not to attend. In the first week of March, any volunteers in high risk categories such as those over 70, those with pre-existing medical conditions or those with any symptoms, however mild, were asked to stay away. Many volunteers wanted to keep coming, and we had to turn some away so that the number of people at the shelter was no higher than necessary. All volunteers and guests were reminded of the guidelines around hand washing and social distancing. Volunteers were asked to wear gloves and the venues were set up with beds and chairs further apart to help guests keep social distance. Anti-bacterial gel and wipes were taken and used at all venues.

The commitment our volunteers and churches showed to B4N in the last month was amazing, including the prayer support from those no longer able to attend. This meant we could continue B4N and prevent our guests from rough sleeping until the point of lockdown when emergency B&B accommodation became available.

Transportation of Beds and Bedding

This year we were able to employ someone to transport the beds and bedding between church venues. **Ashley Vass** joined FAITH for the duration of B4N to help with transportation on all weekday mornings. Very special thanks also go to **George Joyce** who volunteered to transport the beds and bedding at the weekend. We are very grateful to both of you – Thank you.



Bed linen

Bed linen was washed once a week instead of each night. Guests, therefore, had the same bed linen for a week which was transported from venue to venue in their own labelled bedding bag. This saved unnecessary laundry costs and time for B4N volunteers.

Very special thanks to the **laundry teams at Greyfriars Church, English Martyrs Church and New Hope Church** who washed the linen each week and to the **volunteers at English Martyrs** who washed the towels used by the guests for showers at LifeSpring Church. We are very grateful.

Showers

Showers were available for our guests at LifeSpring Church every Wednesday evening and at English Martyrs Church on Friday evenings in February. The luxury of a shower was hugely appreciated by our guests.

Foot Care and Hair Cuts

This year we had the pleasure of welcoming two professional podiatrists to B4N. Anne Bingham from “Forgotton Feet” was joined by Ronke Tinker who came to provide foot care to our B4N guests on two Friday evenings.

A professional hairdresser also joined us one Thursday evening at Carey Baptist Church.

St Mungo's

As in previous years, St Mungo's were the main referrer of guests to B4N this year. As the rough sleeper outreach service commissioned by RBC, St Mungo's are well placed to know who is in genuine need of a bed, and of any other health or wellbeing needs. St Mungo's provide B4N with a guest risk assessment and a signed 'consent to share' form for each referral. They are also able to access information regarding whether the individual has a local connection and, therefore, whether they will be eligible for support from RBC to find long term housing in Reading.

Referrals from other services

This year we also took referrals from **Reading Borough Council (RBC), Launchpad** and the **NHS Liaison and Diversion** service, as well as rough sleepers who self-referred and were known to FAITH from our **ReadiStreet** outreach. **Referrals were not limited to those with local connection only.** Each referrer provided us with a risk assessment and obtained the individual's consent to share. For self-referrals, the individual completed a risk assessment with a member of FAITH staff prior to being admitted to B4N.

For those B4N guests who had not been verified as rough sleepers by St Mungo's, we worked with them to identify their support needs and signpost them to the relevant services.

Reading Borough Council (RBC)

B4N worked closely with RBC again this year and received some referrals directly from the council. We also attended meetings with RBC and St Mungo's to discuss the housing options for B4N guests. **Matt Farrow** from RBC attended several evening sessions at B4N to talk with our guests and offer them advice on their next steps to find housing.



HOLT Nurses

The Health Outreach Liaison Team - HOLT nurses attended B4N in the morning sessions once a week on a pre-arranged day. This gave FAITH staff the opportunity to advise guests when the nurses would be at B4N the following morning. Guests felt relaxed and would approach the nurses if they needed medical assistance or advice on their physical or mental health. The nurses' attendance was extremely helpful and we are very grateful for the HOLT team's commitment to B4N.

Hope Counselling Service

This year part of the Government funding RBC received was allocated to counselling for the homeless. We were able to offer guests the opportunity to speak to a trained counsellor on most Wednesday and Sunday evenings. We are very grateful for Deborah and Elaine from Hope Counselling for giving their time.

Launchpad

Representatives from Launchpad's 'supported housing' and 'floating support' teams visited B4N this year to help make B4N guests aware of the drop in sessions and housing support they offer.

It is great to have had the support of so many other services that support the homeless this year.

The Guest List (including 'Reserves')

Entry to B4N is usually only granted to guests who have been referred. We operated a 'guest list' system as we've done in previous years. As the main referrer, St Mungo's sent us a list by secure email each afternoon with guest names (and assessments for new referrals).

As not everyone on the guest list showed each night, the reserve system worked well and there was no occasion that a guest on the reserve list needed to be turned away. This is the second year that we have operated a reserve system. Having guests on a reserve list means that many more bed spaces can be filled and the B4N occupancy rate has increased significantly in the last 2 years as shown in the table below.

Percentage Use of B4N	2020	2019	2018
Total Number of nights guests attended (A)	1,552	1,310	517
Maximum nights available (Nights x Bed Spaces) (B)	81 x 18 = 1,458	84 x 18 = 1,512	64 x 18 = 1,152
Total usage / occupancy rate (A/B)	106%	87%	45%

Numbers remained high and we ran at full capacity for the majority of B4N 2020, **averaging 19 guests per night.**

Individuals who turned up "on spec" were assessed on a case by case basis. Whether or not they could be offered a bed depended on availability of bed spaces, their vulnerability, and whether B4N staff were able to access risk information and verify them as genuinely homeless.



B4N 2020 Referrals and Outcomes

These are the figures for B4N 2020 with figures from previous years reports included for comparison.

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Number of nights B4N open	81	84	64	58	56	31
Referrals from St Mungo's	26	34	28	52	38	26
Other Referrals (incl Red Cross, RBC, Launchpad, Rahab in 2017)	5	6	0	1	0	0
Church Referrals	0	0	2	0	0	0
Self-referral (of individual known to FAITH)	19	13	10	0	0	0
Total number of guests referred to B4N	50	53	40	53	38	26
Number using B4N	37	42	34	33	38	22
Number housed (including Launchpad, SArmy, Private, Hope Into Action)	4	18	11	17	22	7
Residential Rehabilitation	1	0	0	0	0	0
Successful relocation	1	0	0	0	0	0
Temporary housing – COVID-19 response (with recourse)	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Temporary housing – COVID-19 response (no recourse)	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Long term Hospital	0	1	0	1	0	0
Prison	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sofa surfing with Family / Friends	5	5	0	4	0	2
Waiting List / Homelessness pathway	0	0	5	5	4	0
Left area	0	0	0	2	0	0
Waiting for Rehab	0	0	0	1	0	0
Used sporadically / Not engaging	0	0	6	4	0	4
Waiting List / Ongoing no recourse*	0	8	3	3	0	0
Return to accommodation (after regaining access)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lost Contact	1	9	4	0	0	0

Of the 50 guests referred in 2019, **37 guests stayed at B4N this year**. This compares to 42 guests who stayed at B4N last year.

Full details are in the complete version of this report.

RBC's Response to COVID-19 for Rough Sleepers

The last evening of B4N 2020 was Monday 23 March. The following day, all of our remaining guests were offered a place in self-contained accommodation to enable them to isolate, in line with the government's request for lockdown to minimise the spread of the virus. Full details are in the complete version of this report.

Guests with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

This year we had a larger proportion of guests with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). 20 out of our 37 guests were NRPF and the majority of these guests were from Poland.

However we were able to support some of our guests from Poland by arranging appointments for them with Citizen's Advice Bureau for support with applying for the EU settlement scheme. This is a scheme for EU citizens who were living in the UK before we left the European Union.

Again, fuller details are in the complete version of this report.



Reductions in numbers housed

Despite the complications involved with ending B4N 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the figures in the table above do show a reduction in the number of guests who were able to find appropriate move-on accommodation from B4N this year compared to 2019. This is due in part to a different mix of guests in terms of nationalities and support needs, but also the limited access to housing for them.

Again, a much fuller explanation is given in the complete version of this report.

Comments from guests:

Everyone at B4N were awesome, the food was awesome, awesome staff and volunteers and I'm so grateful for them getting me the supported accommodation I needed, fantastic.

The B4N experience was 'pukka' the staff, the food 'pukka'. There was lots of lovely people.

Nice people, so glad B4N got me to rehab, I had nowhere, hated my life, I now look forward to my future, I'm enjoying Bible studies and so glad I don't need to score. Without everyone's help I wouldn't feel better.

I'm so grateful for everything you have done. What I know if that I have to be patient, pray to God and He will answer my prayers.

Guest behaviour

In general, guests were well behaved and courteous and would happily undertake set up/clear-up duties if asked. In fact some of our guests were so keen to help that we had to stop them taking over the job of our set up volunteers! Although their help was greatly appreciated, letting guests into the churches to help with set up did cause some issues as guests could not be left unsupervised.

On the whole guests got on well, however there were some accusations of bullying reported and some arguments broke out, mainly concerning who slept next to who and where their beds were placed in the venues.

Our guests loved music. They enjoyed listening to records over some speakers (reggae and 80s classics were particular favourites!) or singing and playing instruments themselves. We had some very talented pianists and guitarists stay at B4N this year.

The introduction of a games box this year was a great new addition. Guests often played cards in groups, there were some more serious chess matches and several memorable and hilarious games of Jenga with many guests involved.

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

We had a young couple stay at B4N this year. Their relationship caused no issues in terms of the rules of the night shelter. However it was evident that the stresses of being homeless caused a lot of strain on their relationship. We also had a relationship develop between two guests who met at B4N.

Several of our guests had significant mental health problems and complex needs. We had many guests suffering with addictions to drugs, alcohol or gambling.

One guest's behaviour could become erratic in terms of a drug induced hyperactivity. Three months in and he is still engaging really well on the program and progressing through the various stages of the rehab. He's calm and collected and speaks like a totally different person when we call to offer encouragement and see how he's doing!

Mental Health

Some of our guests this year suffered with severe anxiety. Our volunteers were sensitive to this and helped guests by talking with them and reassuring them when needed.

Again, fuller details are in the complete version of this report.



Impact of COVID-19 on Guests

The last few weeks of B4N 2020 had a very different atmosphere. The mood was much more subdued as we put in place measures to protect guests and volunteers from the spread of COVID-19.

We reduced the number of volunteers attending to the minimum numbers required and asked all volunteers over age 70, those in high risk categories with pre-existing medical conditions or those with any symptoms to stay away. Volunteers were asked to wear gloves and keep social distance as much as possible within the venue which meant less interaction with the guests.

Guests were regularly reminded of the government guidance on washing hands and given anti-bacterial gel to clean their hands when they arrived at the night shelter. They were also given their own personal shower gel / hand wash to use. To help our guests to maintain social distancing, we set up tables for dinner with chairs spread apart. Guests' beds were placed 2 metres apart or as far apart as was possible given the space available.

Again, fuller details are in the complete version of this report.

Incidents

Three guests were banned on separate occasions for abusive language and aggressive behaviour towards volunteers and other guests. The police were called on one of these occasions when the guest involved became aggressive whilst under the influence of drugs and alcohol and would not leave the premises. He was moved on after about an hour and did not cause any other issues.

Drug, alcohol and smoking use on premises was evident at B4N but only on a few occasions when cigarette butts were found in bins or toilets and a wine bottle confiscated from a guest's person. Drug paraphernalia including clean needles was also found in the toilets on one occasion. No guests were excluded solely for drug/alcohol use because unless caught in the act it becomes very difficult to exclude any particular individual for using at a venue.

There were no thefts reported of guest or volunteer belongings.

Medical Issues / Ambulances

An ambulance was called to B4N on **seven occasions** this year – six times for guests and once for a volunteer.

Ambulances were called for four guests in total. Again, fuller details are in the complete version of this report.

An ambulance was also called for one of our volunteers who fell and injured her knee during set up at one of our venues, but did not need hospital treatment. It certainly was a year with a lot of medical emergencies!

On another occasion a taxi was called to take a guest to hospital after calling NHS 111 for severe tooth ache.

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

Special Thanks

ALL of our churches and volunteers, street pastors and prayer teams whose commitment throughout B4N 2020 was amazing, particularly amidst the outbreak of COVID-19.

All those who donated bedding, bed linen, towels, clothes, underwear and food for our guests.

Volunteers who made cards and table decorations for our guests, and all those who washed laundry.

Reading Buses who donated bus passes for our guests to travel to English Martyrs, and to John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Housing at RBC who organised the passes.

Citizen's Advice Bureau for their support with appointments for our guests applying for EU Settled Status.

Hope Counselling service who provided counselling sessions for our guests.

The podiatrists at Forgotten Feet who provided foot care.



COMMENTS FROM RBC, HOLT AND ST MUNGO'S

Comments from Matt Farrow, RBC

B4N 2020 marked another year of a close working relationship between Faith CG, Reading Borough Council and St Mungo's. The aim as ever was to provide a safe place to stay for those who found themselves to be street homeless or at risk of being street homeless in Reading during the cold winter months. That said, B4N and its volunteers provide much more than just somewhere to sleep, warm food, activities and a chance to talk can make a massive difference to the lives of the guests that stay. The ongoing support from the Navigators and B4N co-ordinators ensures that people that want support can access it.

This year the service offer expanded to include 1-2-1 counselling from Hope Counselling Service, support from Reading CAB to help people from outside of the UK that are eligible apply for settled status and in addition another church was added to the list of venues, all of which is testament to the desire of all of those involved to work collaboratively to secure a positive outcome for the guests.

For health and safety reasons the global COVID-19 pandemic forced the provision to close early but good communication and hard work from all the services involved ensured that all of the guests had access to an accommodation in order to help them comply with the social distancing guidelines from Central Government, and it meant that nobody had to return to or to start rough sleep as a result of the unexpected closure.

Thank you to all the Faith CG staff and volunteers that made it happen, all the churches and all the services involved. You made a real difference to a lot of people's lives.

Comment from Amanda, HOLT nurse (Health Outreach Liaison Team)

HOLT attended Bed for a Night once a week to offer support to the team and homeless clients during period Jan-March. We always found Mary and other members of staff approachable and excellent communication routes were maintained. Mary telephoned us directly with any concerns regarding physical and mental health and support was offered to the clients.

The ongoing support offered to the vulnerable clients was always of a high standard and I'm sure every service user benefited when they were accommodated in the Bed for a Night provision in 2020.

Comments from St Mungos

St Mungo's team feedback for B4N 2020.

- Gave St Mungo's an ideal opportunity to engage with clients in a safe place
- Gave those clients with No Recourse to Public Funds a much needed respite from rough sleeping
- Clients reported that they felt valued and listened to as a human beings
- Difficult having to manage those that were not St Mungo's Clients
- At times difficult when more guests were allowed in than initially agreed - this would occasionally prevent a verified rough sleeper accessing a bed
- Clients struggled to understand why that at times there appeared to be different sets of rules
- Clients receiving a hot meal



FEEDBACK FROM VOLUNTEERS

After B4N closes each year, **volunteers** are usually invited to a 'thank you' event and asked to provide feedback.

This year we have not been able to hold such an event due to the restrictions in place for large gatherings of people as a result of COVID-19. We hope to hold a thank you event for B4N 2020 volunteers as soon as all restrictions have been lifted.

We have received some feedback from volunteers via email. The following quotes summarise the feedback received so far.

The best bits about B4N

This experience was life changing for me. Being new to reading and new to Bed for the night - it absolutely changed me as a person. The volunteers and their kindness and friendship was outstanding, the bonds that were built at B4N on Tuesday's with the guests is something I won't forget. I never wanted to miss a week for fear that the guests thought I wouldn't be back. Thank you for the opportunity to help!

I feel incredibly fortunate and privileged to have been able to play a small part in such a wonderful venture.

Witnessing how quickly guests accept and appreciate the love, hospitality and care that B4N provides.

Working alongside and meeting such wonderful people, helping to do all we can for our guests and the great camaraderie and atmosphere in the shelters.

Having a faith-filled prayer team, praying so faithfully and reliably every Friday evening alongside us. Their prayers were answered on many an occasion.

The kindness and willingness of one young guest to translate for and help look after another guest when he became unwell.

Welcoming a previous guest for dinner and hearing his great testimony. Great he wanted to come back to be with us.

God's provision of our food. Always enough, over and above. All praise to Him.

What worked well this year?

The whole set up is amazing, mostly run by volunteers, it was very well organised everyone knew what to do and just got on with it. Important procedures were clearly explained.

The friendliness of other volunteers.

Guests on the whole were really polite and appreciative and nice to see the camaraderie between them.

I found the guests to be friendly and helpful this year.

We were well supported with messages via the What's App group and there was a good system for knowing when your shift was due and for swopping if required.

What was difficult? (This is an abridged list)

It was upsetting to see the deterioration in health of one guest particularly who was taken into hospital, to A&E, near the end of B4N period.

I was saddened to see a few 'old faces' amongst the guests who had been with B4N in 2019 and wondered if some were 'on the street' through personal choice or if something just hadn't worked out for them.

It was difficult when there were too many volunteers in one evening.

Some nights I felt surplus to requirements; it was difficult when I didn't have much to do.



Both the night supervisor and myself were concerned that the rule of no one in after 10pm was to be broken for one guest because he had special circumstances. (Management comment – this was done for very good reasons which could not be disclosed)

I would have appreciated more specific info on guests that had problems at other venues. As Coordinator I felt I need to know situations we might encounter at our venue.

One difficulty I found was where guests were told one thing at one venue, and then another at the one I was at. For example one guest was allowed out past 11 to smoke at the previous venue but we didn't let them out and they got very angry.

Ideas for improvements

There are lots of suggestions listed in the full version of this report. Perhaps the most immediately practical is:-
Plastic luggage labels, which wouldn't fall off, so over-night bags could be identified easily.



PROPOSALS AND CHANGES FOR B4N 2021

Sadly due to all the uncertainty remaining around COVID-19 and the associated restrictions on group gatherings, the arrangements for B4N 2021 are very uncertain at this time.

In fact it looks sadly as if we will be unable to run the Night Shelter at all and it may be down to the Government to put in place the very expensive system of temporary housing in B & B's and hotels.

Thank you for reading.

The B4N team

Mary
Amanda
Alison
Sarah
Wendy
Tara
Ash
Malcolm