

Colchester Emergency Night Shelter



www.colchesternightshelter.org.uk

Annual report
July 2013

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT for the year ended 31 March 2013

Registered office: Colchester Emergency Night Shelter
39/41 Alexandra Road
Colchester CO3 3DF

Telephone : 01206 549885

Email: enquiries@colchesternightshelter.org.uk
or trustees@colchesternightshelter.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 803328

Company Registration No: 02475258

Trustees/Directors: Marian Clegg (Secretary)
Julie Brice
Gordon Evans (Honorary Treasurer)
Teresa Hall
Pauline Hart
Peter Kerr (Chairman)
Lynne McMorris
Julie Ward

Co-ordinator: Pernille Petersen, MBE

Colchester Emergency Night Shelter has received support from:

National Lottery
Charities Board

Colchester Borough
Council

Essex County
Council

Lloyds TSB Foundation
for England and Wales



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS ENDING 31 MARCH

| NIGHT SHELTER INCOME | 2012-13 | 2011-12 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Housing Benefit | £ 109,735 | £ 107,215 | £ 102,176 | £ 80,604 |
| Residents' fees | £ 17,174 | £ 17,310 | £ 14,906 | £ 10,798 |
| Supporting People | £ 51,607 | £ 51,518 | £ 52,985 | £ 57,061 |
| Colchester Borough + Other Councils | £ 5,832 | £ 10,440 | £ 5,606 | £ 5,523 |
| Essex CC Drug+Alcohol Action Team | £ - | £ 18,000 | £ 18,000 | £ 17,350 |
| Lloyds TSB Foundation/JP Getty Trust | £ 14,058 | £ 5,458 | £ - | £ - |
| Homeless Link (WRAP support) | £ 1,370 | £ - | £ - | £ - |
| General Donations and Legacies | £ 19,874 | £ 20,197 | £ 14,186 | £ 14,056 |
| Special Donations/fundraising (refurbishment) | £ 280 | £ 18,606 | £ 379 | £ 26,708 |
| Bank interest | £ 70 | £ 64 | £ 37 | £ 61 |
| TOTAL | £ 220,000 | £ 248,808 | £ 208,275 | £ 212,161 |
| NIGHT SHELTER EXPENDITURE | | | | |
| Salaries and related expenditure | £ 146,879 | £ 144,982 | £ 133,653 | £ 126,629 |
| Food & provisions/cleaning materials | £ 22,947 | £ 20,955 | £ 19,234 | £ 18,625 |
| Expenditure on residents (travel, computing, personal development activities etc) | £ 1,473 | £ 688 | £ 683 | £ 1,068 |
| Property - running costs (utilities/ replacement furniture/domestic equipment) | £ 14,837 | £ 14,224 | £ 13,735 | £ 11,748 |
| Property - fabric (general repairs/security) | £ 20,585 | £ 16,594 | £ 10,179 | £ 13,905 |
| Property - fabric+furniture (refurbishment) | £ - | £ 17,900 | £ - | £ 22,476 |
| Insurance | £ 6,207 | £ 6,095 | £ 6,006 | £ 5,622 |
| Office and professional costs | £ 12,406 | £ 10,683 | £ 11,693 | £ 12,579 |
| TOTAL | £ 225,334 | £ 232,121 | £ 195,183 | £ 212,652 |
| SURPLUS/DEFICIT in the year | -£5,334 | £ 16,687 | £ 13,092 | -£491 |
| RESERVES CARRIED FORWARD | £ 101,815 | £ 107,149 | £ 90,462 | £ 77,370 |
| Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme: Income | £ 1,062 | £ 4,892 | £ 4,920 | £ 3 |
| Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme: Expenditure | £ 1,685 | £ 2,560 | £ 320 | £ 2,785 |
| SURPLUS/DEFICIT in the year | -£623 | £ 2,332 | £4,600 | -£2,782 |
| FUND AT PERIOD END | £ 14,172 | £ 14,795 | £ 12,463 | £ 7,863 |

The summarised accounts do not contain all the information required by law to be included in the accounts of the charity. The full accounts are filed with the Charity Commissioners and Companies House. A copy of the full accounts for the year may be obtained from the Charity Commission website or by writing to the Secretary of Colchester Emergency Night Shelter.

The political context:

As predicted last year, the political climate has become no warmer for the poor and homeless. During the past few months we have seen local authorities trying to save money by denying night shelters housing benefit for their residents. Not all the authorities have been successful when met with challenges by the charities that run the shelters. Happily for us, Colchester Borough Council (CBC) are very supportive of the work we do and we provide enough support and facilities to escape this ruling.

One of our new Trustees will be talking to us about Welfare Reform at the AGM. This is creating a very challenging and uncertain time for both us and our residents

On the home front:

Meanwhile, we are struggling increasingly with a group of residents with multiple needs and associated risks, as you will see from our risk and needs assessment on the following page. You will also notice from the reports from our Resettlement and Personal Development Workers that it is becoming harder to find suitable accommodation and we have to provide a wider range of essential services to our residents.

Financially we are just about managing to keep our head above water. Last year we were once again supported by generous donations from the local community. We also received funding from the J Paul Getty Trust to extend our Personal Development project with residents. In the current financial year, we are fortunate in having been chosen by Colne Housing as their charity for 2013 and we have received an additional £3,000 from CBC. Without this continuing support we would not be able to provide so much for residents.

You will find on many of the following pages references to the changing and increasing nature of the challenging issues experienced by many of the Night Shelter's residents. And of course, very few residents have only one or two of these needs:

RESIDENTS' RISKS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2012-13

| ALL RESIDENTS | 218 | |
|---------------------------|------------|-----|
| Alcohol | 78 | 36% |
| Drugs | 81 | 37% |
| Mental + Emotional Health | 127 | 58% |
| Physical Health | 87 | 40% |
| Learning disabilities | 47 | 22% |
| Literacy + Numeracy | 32 | 15% |
| Offender | 138 | 63% |
| Aggression to others | 65 | 30% |
| Debts | 67 | 31% |
| Gambler | 4 | 2% |
| Rough sleeper | 83 | 38% |
| Armed forces link | 12 | 6% |

We have introduced new procedures during the last year to integrate Resettlement and Personal Development work more closely which will assist in the development of action plans for each resident and identify which people need most support. This also allows the

Project staff to work more closely with residents in the evenings by indentifying targets from the resident's action plan and talking to them about their progress.

Sadly, on the governance side we are saying goodbye to Marian Clegg and Gordon Evans who between them have done an absolutely massive amount of extremely complex work for us over a long period of time (17 and 20 years respectively) with considerable good humour and generosity. It is a loss that we will struggle with for a while even though plans have been made and implemented to fill the gap. The Trustees appointed Colchester Community Voluntary Services (CCVS) in 2012 to take over the daily accounting function and they are doing a brilliant job for example with the book keeping and payroll. We also have new Trustees on board who, thankfully, are taking on some of the tasks which Gordon and Marian have done in the past. Members of the management team are taking on other parts of the work.

From a personal point of view I find it hard to express just how much I have valued Gordon's and Marian's contribution to the work of the Shelter and to my wellbeing through their unstinting support. All the best to both of them.

A TREASURER'S VALEDICTION

Gordon Evans

It has been fun!

It started with a chance meeting with Pernille Petersen in St. James-the-Less Catholic church in Priory Street all those years ago and, now, after 20 years I must take my leave. I am now retired and live in Rochford, which my age keeps telling me is a long way away from Colchester.

It will be difficult to say Cheerio!

It will be very difficult to say farewell to the boys and girls that make up the Board of Trustees and the Management as I believe they are second to none. I will miss them and the residents but will retain the memories of happy times and, of course, keep in touch.

It has been difficult at times!

With many trials and tribulations, and it remains so as other parts of this document clearly show. I can remember years ago when I used to attend the Night Shelter on Tuesday evenings to do the payroll and pay the bills, running into many a resident who had fallen off the ladder of life. And not only had they fallen off, but someone had nicked the bottom rung of the ladder and they needed help to get back on. That was where the Night Shelter and its wonderful team sprang into action. In those days, the Night Shelter provided place to sleep, something to eat and the means to look clean and tidy for each resident as they began their search for accommodation. Then the maximum stay was 28 days and the residents seldom, if ever, stayed any longer.

These days because most of the residents, in general, have other issues other than being homeless, the average stay is much longer. Now a simple 'wash and brush up with some hot food and a good night's sleep' are not all that is required for the majority of the residents. However – and this shows how the Night Shelter has had to adopt and adapt over the past two decades – the residents are given help to sort out their health problems, their accommodation requirements, their training for living an independent life and support after they have left the Night Shelter. The staff at the Night Shelter, together with other agencies in the town, must work much harder to help each homeless person that crosses the threshold in Alexandra Road and achieve the right result.

And they do!

Achievements; hundreds of them over the years and all without the praise and adulation that so many dedicated people deserve; people who are certainly not in the job to earn lots of money. Their reward is the job satisfaction that is earned by helping someone less fortunate than themselves over a difficult period in their life. Over the years that I have been associated with the Night Shelter, Pernille Petersen has been the leading light and the driving force. Without her, the Night Shelter – and other agencies in the town - would not have been what they are today.

If only!

Someone like Pernille was in charge of the social funds and that the so-called government at all levels and the people that wear suits in our county and town halls were as attuned to the needs of the homeless as Pernille and her staff must be at all times. Night Shelters have a right to occupy positions in society alongside other care agencies yet, over the decades, I have witnessed constraint after constraint placed on the funds that are available to help the needy in our society. Constraints dreamed up by someone else set in authority above us just so they can protect their own jobs and afford to go to their tailors for their expensive suits. Not all so-called civil servants, which includes MP's, are the same but there are enough to make life very difficult for those who just want to get on and help others. These days, in my opinion, the bottom rung of the ladder of life has disappeared for good and, unfortunately, so has the second rung gone for some as well.

But do the Trustees, staff and the residents at the Night Shelter give up?

No they do not! For at the end of the day, the Good Samaritan survives in a lot of people, and those in authority who make unwarranted and hurtful decisions that cut to the very core of the voluntary and low paid work we all do, is merely the man who passed by on the other side.

Along with the sorrow I feel to say farewell, there are regrets!

Regrets because I step down as Honorary Treasurer and Trustee without achieving what I have long wanted to do over recent years. And that is to find £3million (today's value) to fund the construction of a purpose built night shelter in Colchester; a building equipped to handle the modern needs of the homeless – including those who are disabled - and a building less cramped and less expensive to run. The existing building, the freehold of which is owned by the charity and must be worth a sizeable sum, is a conglomeration of three terraced houses with different levels, tight spaces and an expensive upkeep. A purpose built Night Shelter to help the homeless who, after all, will be a constant presence in our society for generations to come, built on the lines of new Night Shelters in London and elsewhere, would serve the town well. Who knows, someone that reads these notes might know where the rainbow ends?

And so it is farewell and thank you!

Thank you Colchester Emergency Night Shelter and all the lovely people with whom you have been - and always will be - associated. Thank you to my fellow trustees, past and present, to the dedicated staff, and to the residents. Thank you to all those who have helped me keep my feet on the ground for the past two decades and be forever grateful that I have been privileged to always have a roof over my head.

It has been fun!

RESETTLEMENT

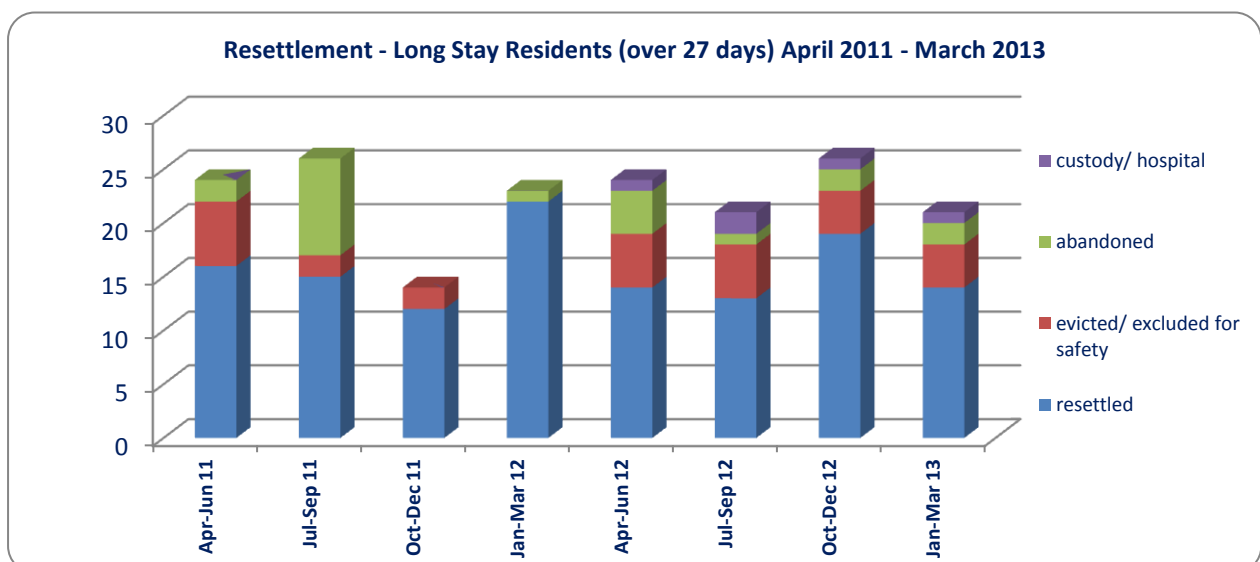
Marina Woodrow

I can honestly say that the last year has probably been the most difficult year I have ever had with resettling residents. We all knew the Welfare Reform would have an impact on our residents but with the lack of information available in the lead up to the changes it made my job most difficult. I was unable to plan accordingly and thus residents had to stay at the Night Shelter much longer than planned. At times, it almost felt like "stepping into the unknown".

In the past residents have relied heavily on Crisis Loans for Rent in Advance via the Social Fund. This, as you may be aware, has now been scrapped and Rent in Advance is now available via a Budgeting Loan. This will pose problems for some of our residents as it is a requirement that they have been in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based JSA, Income-Based ESA or Pension Credit for a minimum of 26 weeks. They will not qualify if they are on a sanction, which are being imposed far more frequently for any infringement of rules such as non-attendance at interviews, or if they have had a period in hospital or prison even when they fit the criteria to be able to apply for a rapid reclaim. This latter ruling will affect many of our residents as you will see from the statistics that two-thirds have a history of offending, although not all of those offences result in prison sentences.

Since April 2013 and the demise of the Social Fund, residents are no longer able to apply for assistance for other costs such as service charges. They can, however, apply for a Short Term Benefit Advance to assist with costs whilst they are awaiting a benefits payments but to date not one of have our residents been successful in obtaining this and they have been put at serious risk of homelessness, re-offending and re-using during this frustrating and unhelpful process.

Despite these difficult times residents who have engaged with the resettlement process and remained patient in the face of knock-backs and negativity have been successfully housed. Over the past year we successfully settled 65% of residents who stayed with us for 28 days or more. The comparable figure in the previous year was 75%.



It is evident from the graph that more residents were taken into custody or for emergency treatment in hospital and that there were a greater number of evictions/exclusions for safety, both a reflection of the increasingly challenging nature of our residents.

Many of our residents have over-lapping issues of alcohol or drug abuse, mental health issues and a history of offending. Also around 20% are assessed as having some form of learning difficulty and 15%, probably an underestimate, admit to having problems with reading and writing, so imagine the difficulties these residents have to cope with every single day. Coupled with the ever-changing, complicated benefit system and lack of suitable housing our anticipation is that it will become even harder to resettle residents and that these figures will, in the future, become far worse.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sylvia Jeffock

The Personal Development Project is now an established part of the Night Shelter after its introduction last year. The additional funding from JP Getty added to the Lloyds TSB Foundation funding secured in the previous year has allowed us to increase project hours and to extend it for an extra year to 2015.

The majority of residents have significant secondary issues in addition to their primary need for secure accommodation. Our aim is to ensure that all residents are offered support to identify and address those issues and gain the social skills necessary to maintain their own tenancy once they leave the Night Shelter. We work with clients to develop an action plan which includes specific objectives to meet their goals. Often this support is best offered by outside agencies and we encourage people to access services provided by organisations such as Open Road, Health in Mind, Beacon House and the April Centre. We also offer assistance with contacting and liaising with statutory agencies such as Social Services, DWP, Probation and Community Mental Health Teams. Often this can involve helping people to schedule their time effectively and in some cases to escort them to appointments. Where training and educational needs are identified I help people to identify suitable options including Adult Community Learning at the Wilson Marriage Centre and TBG. We have also developed links with the new volunteer centre in Lion Walk.

One change over the last year has been an increasing amount of benefits advice given directly to residents. Residents have been helped to claim their benefits and inform DWP of their change in circumstances. Our aim for the next year is to offer all residents a benefit check on admission to ensure they are receiving the correct benefits. This is likely to become more important with the introduction of Universal Credit, which can only be claimed online. We have applied to Essex County Council for extra residents' computers which will help us to achieve this.

The next challenge is to develop more in-house activities. Although residents have access to many activities provided by other groups such as the April Centre or Matrix we would like to be able to provide opportunities and recognised training for people who do not feel able to take advantage of these and to increase the sense of the Night Shelter as a community. Volunteers already provide cooking and gardening opportunities at the weekend and several residents have helped with projects in the house. We have been talking to different agencies and hope to be able to offer health checks and support with looking for work.

Some 30% of our residents stay for a very short time before moving on which gives us very little opportunity to work with them. Discounting this 30%, the following table (extracted from the reports we are required to make to Supporting People) shows how successful we were in helping those residents who did stay for more than a week. With the extension of the Personal Development Project we hope to improve outcomes achieved by residents with our support.

2012-13 Outcomes

percent

Number of residents with more than 7 contact days 154 71%

who were:

| | | | |
|------------|--|-----|-----|
| SP1 | SUPPORTED to regain or develop skills to manage their finances, benefits or debts | 124 | 81% |
| SP2 | ENTERED education, training or employment (including voluntary/work experience) | 104 | 68% |
| SP3 | SUPPORTED to engage with relevant services/support networks, including community resources & facilities, peer support/self help groups | 144 | 94% |
| SP4 | SUPPORTED to plan ahead and to manage risks as they wish/in an appropriate way | 146 | 95% |
| SP5 | HAD/ACCESSED appropriate support to maintain or improve their physical, mental and emotional health | 125 | 81% |

The last year has been interesting and challenging. Even with the increased hours it is difficult to accomplish all that residents need to really progress. But with the help of my colleagues and the other projects providing support I am still hopeful that my work puts people on the right track towards self fulfilment and contributing to the community.

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

Marian Clegg

After 17 years supporting the Night Shelter in an administrative capacity, I am moving on: both my daughters, and their husbands, work and live in and near Oxford so it makes sense for us to move nearer to them. I view the move both with sadness that I am leaving and in anticipation of finding new challenges.

I initially became involved in the Night Shelter when the chairman at the time, Revd Bernard Arnold whom many of you will remember, saw a need for support for the administration side of the Night Shelter's work. He knew I was looking for something to involve myself in while my children were at school so asked if I would be a volunteer administration secretary. The first meeting I attended was exactly 17 years ago from this year's AGM, on 4 July 1996.

My main role at that stage was to take minutes of meetings and to continue work on a client database which had just started to be developed by a previous volunteer. I have continued these roles ever since, particularly developing and expanding the recording systems to mesh in with the onerous reporting requirements of Supporting People when it was initially set up and revising it again to record outcomes as well as residents' needs as the work of the Night Shelter has developed over the years, both in response to the challenging needs of residents and to meet the requirements of our funders.

One of the results of monitoring client records for so long is that I know that our occupancy level in 1992, one year after the Night Shelter moved into its current premises, was 75%, or

an average of 15 beds every night. Occupancy increased year on year to around 90% (18 beds a night) in 2000-2004 then to 95% (19 beds a night) from 2004 up to last year. These figures disguise those times, particularly during the winter, when there are many weeks with beds full every night and even more people sent out to sleep in halls under the Winter Reserve Accommodation Project (WRAP) initiative. "Wrappers" are fed and given the full support of the Night Shelter just like any other resident, which puts much greater pressure on the facilities, and staff, during the weeks that it operates.

In the first quarter of this year the Night Shelter was full almost every night (99% occupancy) and a further 74 bed nights were supported by WRAP. WRAP numbers vary dramatically from year to year depending on the climate, both weather and political: some years it has been needed, and used, very little; on others we can be turning people away because there aren't sufficient WRAP spaces for everyone who needs one on that particular night. The highest ever was in the winter of 2005/6 when 196 bed nights were provided in halls. It has become increasingly difficult in recent years to find venues and volunteers, which puts even more stress on Night Shelter staff at what is already a difficult time for them: I hope you will continue to support the Night Shelter in this programme and that more of you will become involved in future years.

I have been very grateful to the Night Shelter staff and give my sincere thanks for their support and friendship. They were always amazed when I arrived unexpectedly, usually on a Wednesday afternoon between morning and evening sessions of my day job, saying that I was there because I needed somewhere I could de-stress and relax! Managing a Night Shelter is not a relaxing occupation and I have great admiration for the staff who do so day in and day out, as most of them have for many years.

Whilst I am giving my thanks, I mustn't leave out my husband who has been very patient about the amount of time I have given to the Night Shelter. I also thank my fellow Trustees for the essential work they do in the background, often unnoticed, to support the Night Shelter. That goes particularly for Gordon Evans, who is also retiring at this AGM after serving even longer having been appointed as a Trustee in May 1993. He has been Honorary Treasurer twice and Chairman between those two sessions, and sometimes both at the same time!

Unfortunately, the Night Shelter is still needed to support the most vulnerable in our society and is likely to be even more needed in the future with the current political initiatives for welfare reform: we don't record the number of people we turn away but on the sunny May morning that I am sitting writing this at the Night Shelter, we have taken a referral on the door for the only vacant space and have had to tell a further four on the telephone before lunchtime that there is no more room.

At the time I started, I asked not to become a Trustee as it is always difficult to record meetings and take a full part in the discussion/decision-making process, but I did eventually agree when the Night Shelter needed more trustees and could not find anyone else - that was also when I became Company Secretary. This expanded my role and I became more involved in supporting the business management and in monitoring the finances on a frequent basis. I have been gradually devolving these roles ready for leaving, the first being the highly successful outsourcing last year of responsibility for bookkeeping and payroll to CCVS Financial Services.

We now have some new Trustees with new ideas to take the Night Shelter forward but, as ever, it would be good to have more so if you are interested in becoming a Trustee, please talk to Pernille Petersen or to any of the Trustees.

CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

Peter Kerr

If you have come this far I would like to commend your fortitude – and thank you most sincerely for your patience! We have had a busy year one way and another, which means it has been absolutely normal in all respects! We have faced - and invariably dealt with - the requisite number of crises, survived the icy blast of winter and are braced to meet the challenges of the coming year.

Many of these crises would not and could not have been dealt with except for the sterling support we receive from all of you members of organisations who contribute to our funds and those private individuals who find room for donations to us among the many competing, if equally deserving, causes. On behalf of my fellow Trustees and all the staff of the Night Shelter, I would like to extend my heartfelt and grateful thanks to each and every one of you and the wish that you might be able to continue your support for the next twelve months. Please be assured without it our struggles would soon approach the level of desperation, to the detriment of the many who come to our doors and need our help and support.

For it is to support the homeless that the Colchester Emergency Night Shelter exists. Each one who knocks on our door has a story to tell and our staff and volunteers are fully committed to providing the emergency shelter and guiding them towards a solution to the problems that led them to their situations.

Our aim is to continue to provide this shelter with its attendant benefits. However, in meeting this aim, we ourselves have a few challenges of our own to overcome. Not least of these is the revised Government arrangements for welfare payments to job-seekers and those who have become unemployed for medical or other reasons beyond their control.

Our constant endeavour is to manage the funds we receive and to look at any and every opportunity to increase those funds. In this respect, we can offer nothing but the greatest praise and heartfelt appreciation to all of those who donate voluntarily to our resources, whether by generous financial assistance or by devoting their time and energy to provide other help.

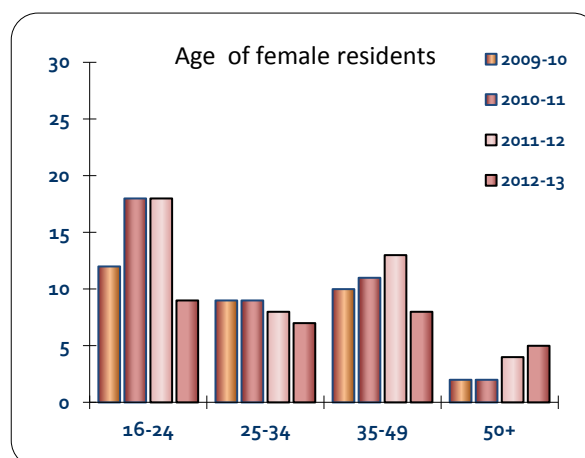
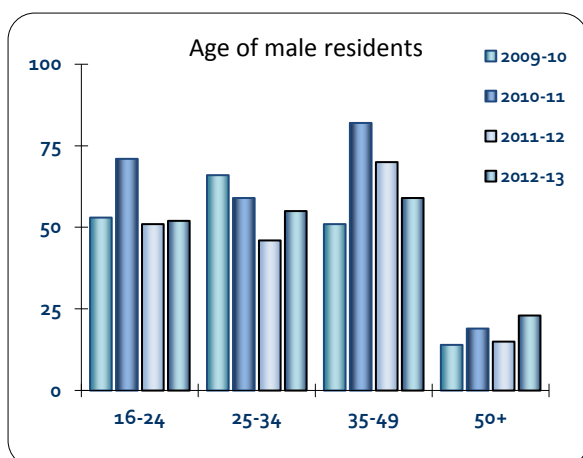
Besides financial support, we also have a crying need for people – either as Trustees to provide the supervisory management of the Shelter or as volunteers who can provide hands-on assistance with the shelter itself.

In this respect, may I offer an invitation to anyone who might be able to join the Board of Trustees – particularly anyone with Secretarial skills and anyone with a financial background. If you know of anyone – or if you yourself can help - we would be more than happy to welcome you; if you wish, please come and attend a Management meeting and see for yourself what we do before committing yourself to any long term arrangements.

We would also love to hear from anyone who could help with some office administration work – perhaps an hour or two for a few mornings a week; nothing too onerous but to take the strain of paperwork whilst the staff attend to the needs of residents and deal with the various agencies with whom we have necessary contact.

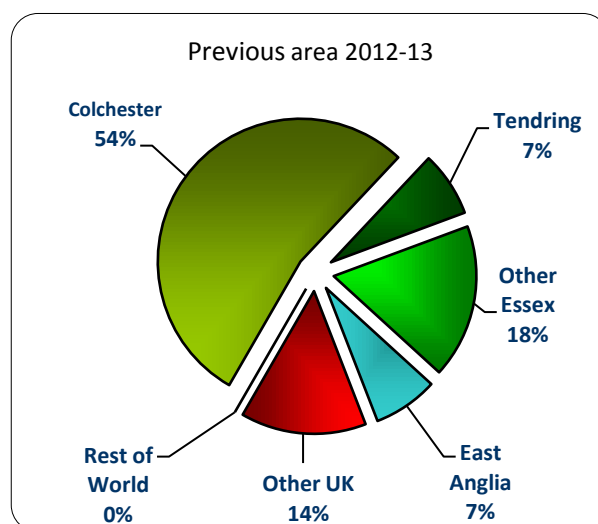
RESIDENTS' PROFILE, 2012-13

During the last year the Night Shelter helped 29 female and 189 male residents. One encouraging figure is that there were far fewer young females (under 25) than in any previous year.



It will come as no surprise after reading the reports by our Resettlement and Personal Development Workers that average stays have increased once again – to 40 days for females and 33 days for males. There are still, though, nearly a quarter who leave within the first week. The majority of these abandon and some are excluded as they are unable to comply with the rules or have too high needs to be supported in a Night Shelter environment, but there are also those who just need short term accommodation - 15% while moving into private rented or supported accommodation and a further 15% who return to their family or partner.

Each year we are finding that more of our residents are already in Colchester or our neighbouring Essex boroughs – 78% in the past year, with a further 7% from Suffolk and Norfolk – but this doesn't necessarily mean that they have a local connection which is becoming more important, particularly for resettlement when the withdrawal of discretionary Council Tax benefit by some Councils from those without a local connection can make the difference between being able to afford rented accommodation and falling into arrears.



You will see that we no longer have residents arriving straight from boats docking in Harwich, whereas a few years ago we would have had several. We do have a small but increasing minority of East European residents, 6% in 2012-13 from Poland and the Baltic States, but they have mainly been in the UK for some time working before arriving at the Night Shelter.

Referral patterns are fairly consistent from year-to-year, although individual referring agencies within that pattern may vary:

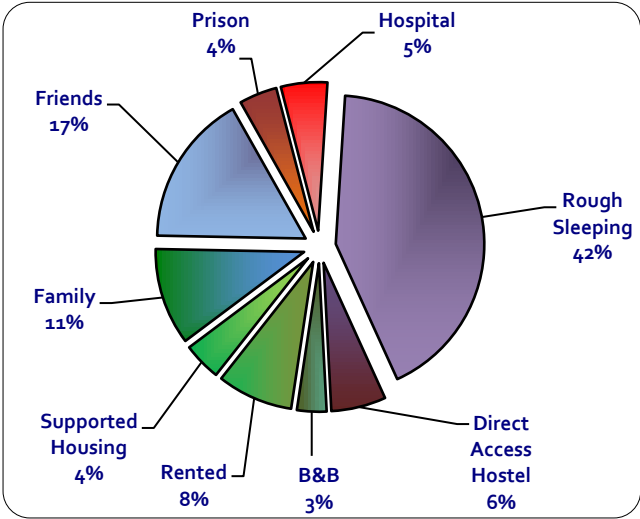
- 50% self-refer, either because they have stayed before – some many years before – or they are told about the Night Shelter by friends, family or find it on the internet;
- 25% are referred by a wide variety of voluntary organisations; and
- 25% are referred by public authorities including councils across Essex and beyond, social services, hospitals and prisons.

The final two charts illustrate the precarious nature of life for many of the most vulnerable in our society. Every year fewer come to us directly from settled accommodation: rented, supported or living with parents/partners. And the number sleeping on the streets, in parks, sometimes in tents or in their cars increases.

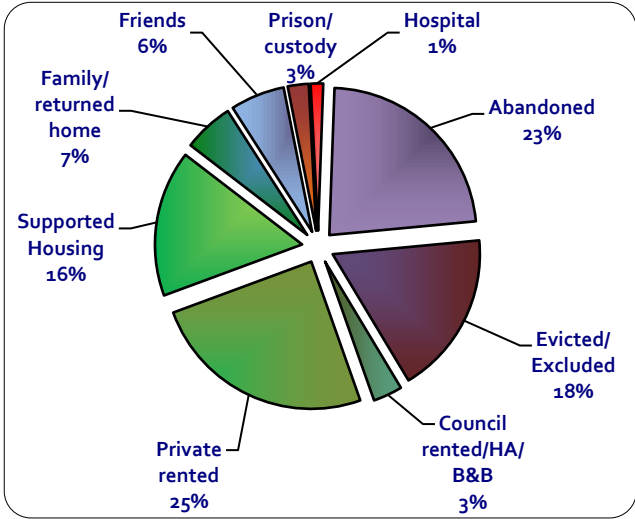
Another telling statistic is that 5% of residents last year were admitted to the Night Shelter directly on discharge from hospitals in Colchester or Chelmsford. This figure was much lower before 2010, in some years none at all, but has been gradually increasing over the past 3 years.

On the other hand the percentage coming directly from prison has been decreasing, which is counter-intuitive given the greater number residents with a history of offending – 63% this year compared with only 50% two years ago. So this is not necessarily the true picture: many more have been discharged not long before admission but have been sleeping rough or “sofa surfing” with family or friends for a few weeks until their welcome runs out.

2012-13 Residents: Came from:



Left for:



Comparing the two charts shows the success of our resettlement work – only 25% of residents were living in settled accommodation before coming to the Night Shelter but in conjunction with our partner agencies we successfully reintegrate 50% into the community.

There is no room for complacency, though, as the other 50% still need more help. Some we see again and have more opportunities to work with them; others, sadly, will slip between all the safety nets and off the bottom rungs of the ladder referred to by Gordon.