



2023/24 CROSSWAYS



WINTER EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT REPORT

It Takes a City (Cambridge), c/o St Andrews Street Baptist Church, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3 AR
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'As It Takes A City closes the doors on Crossways for the third year it is exciting to see what has been achieved this winter for so many residents. To hear from residents as they leave of the enormous change that accessing Crossways has made to their lives, for some it is about finding support they can trust or about successfully connecting with specialist services. But most impactful is when someone simply says that they have found a safe space that feels like home'. **Lis Silver, ITAC CEO**

With continued funding from Cambridge City Council (now in the form of a 3-year contract) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), It Takes a City (ITAC) ran the 24/7 winter emergency accommodation project at Crossways for a third year, (01/11/22 to 31/03/24). The service provided 20 bedrooms with private facilities, most en-suite, every day throughout this five-month period, plus 3 emergency pop-up beds during SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) periods.

- **48 individuals accommodated**
- **4 individuals accommodated during SWEP periods**
- **3 individuals who left were allowed to re-access and given a second opportunity**
- **27 individuals secured moves or offers of moves to longer-term accommodation**

The project was staffed Monday to Friday by a team of experienced ITAC support workers alongside a small team of Evolve Security guards who were on site 24/7.



Lucy and Chris (ITAC Staff)

Many of our guests had complex needs. Yet again, the community came together to provide wraparound support to help them achieve lasting change.

Working closely with partner agencies and over 100 amazing volunteers, our guests were provided with access to food and drinks throughout the day, a hot evening meal, laundry service and access to specialist support.

Faith groups, schools, businesses, university students, and many others stepped up to donate food, warm clothing, footwear, personal items, and phones.

We are always looking for local businesses and organisations to support our work at Crossways this winter. If you can help us with donations, fundraising events, corporate/team volunteering, or in any other way, please contact info@itac.org.uk

Volunteers Change Lives

'The food we cooked seemed to be appreciated and I met some really interesting people. It really felt like a happy family atmosphere.' **Rachel, Lead Cook**

As in previous years, we partnered with community organisations including the Cambridge Churches Homelessness Project (CCHP), student societies and individuals to recruit and train a volunteer team of 100+ people to supplement the support offered by ITAC and Evolve Security staff. Volunteers at the project assisted in a variety of tasks including:

- preparation and serving of cooked evening meals
- cleaning of communal areas and vacated bedrooms
- weekend daytime cover at the project
- providing companionship for guests
- stock management of donated food, clothes, toiletries and other key consumables.



Our amazing volunteers preparing Christmas dinner

2500+ hours given by volunteers in 2023/24

Many volunteers returned for a second, or even third year, demonstrating how much they valued and enjoyed the experience.

'I had a great experience at Crossways. The best time for me was always sitting at the table with the residents for dinner. I had the opportunity to meet Keeley and Paddy, both wonderful people who stand out for their kindness and great personality. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to have this experience.' **Miruska, Early Evening Host and Mealtime Assistant**

Alex, Mike and Steve spoke about volunteering at Crossways in the following video.



Watch on YouTube

'I really enjoyed hosting at Crossways. Everyone was so welcoming and friendly, both the volunteers and the guests. The guests taught me how easy it is, if circumstances go against you, that you find yourself homeless and sleeping on the streets. My thanks go to Keeley and Chris who made Crossways such a happy place to volunteer'. **Early Evening Host**

Case Study: A's Story



'A' was a Mauritian national who came to the UK 6 years ago to work in the horseracing industry. Unfortunately, due to increasing issues with alcohol, he was unable to maintain his employment, lost his accommodation and ended up sleeping rough in the city centre.

As a foreign nation 'A' had No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) and was found by the Street Outreach Team in a vulnerable state. He was the first guest to find a place in Crossways when it opened in November.

'A' expressed a desire to return to his home country under the Voluntary Return Service (VRS). However, his drinking meant he would not be issued with the necessary 'fit to fly' certificate.

With support from our dedicated team, Crossways provided 'A' with the space, time and resources to begin addressing his issues and reduce his alcohol consumption. He also attended regular activities and received welfare advice at Wintercomfort, one of our partner agencies.

After several weeks of this intensive support, 'A' was able to prove his fitness to fly and was repatriated under the VRS. Before leaving he expressed his thanks to the Street Outreach Team and staff at Crossways, who he said 'Have saved my life'.

Partnership In Action

'We are aware of the gaps in provision for LGBTQ+ folks and were really encouraged to see the ways in which trauma awareness and approaches sensitive to vulnerability are central to your work, making Crossways safer than many spaces for LGBTQ+ folks, and for everyone'. **Alex Clare-Young, CSH Founder**

We continued to grow and develop our network of partner agencies, enabling those residents who struggled to keep external appointments to receive the specialist support they required either at Crossways or being accompanied by one of our team.



Kerry and Frankie from Terrence Higgins Trust visit Crossways

Specialist agencies including Change, Grow, Live (CGL), the drug and alcohol recovery service, Dual Diagnosis Street Project (DDSP) the mental health focussed Street Outreach Project, and a nurse from the local GP surgery were again all regular visitors to the project.

New partnerships were formed with Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) and Cambridge Solidarity Hub (CSH). THT provided supplies of condoms and STI testing kits to improve the sexual health of our guests, whilst CSH provided advice around ensuring that LGBTQ+ guests felt safe and appropriately supported at the project.

Case Study: M's Story



'M' was originally from Southern Europe but had found herself on the streets of Cambridge. She had been sleeping rough for many years.

'M' had No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) when she was contacted by the Street Outreach Team (SOT). Working with our team at Crossways, 'M' was offered a place in the first week of opening.

'M' had a particular set of needs when trying to find her next step away from street life and the team explored many avenues with our partner agencies. Throughout her time at Crossways, 'M' worked with the support staff to gain access to benefits through her employment with Wintercomfort so that she can now access second-stage accommodation in the city appropriate to her needs".

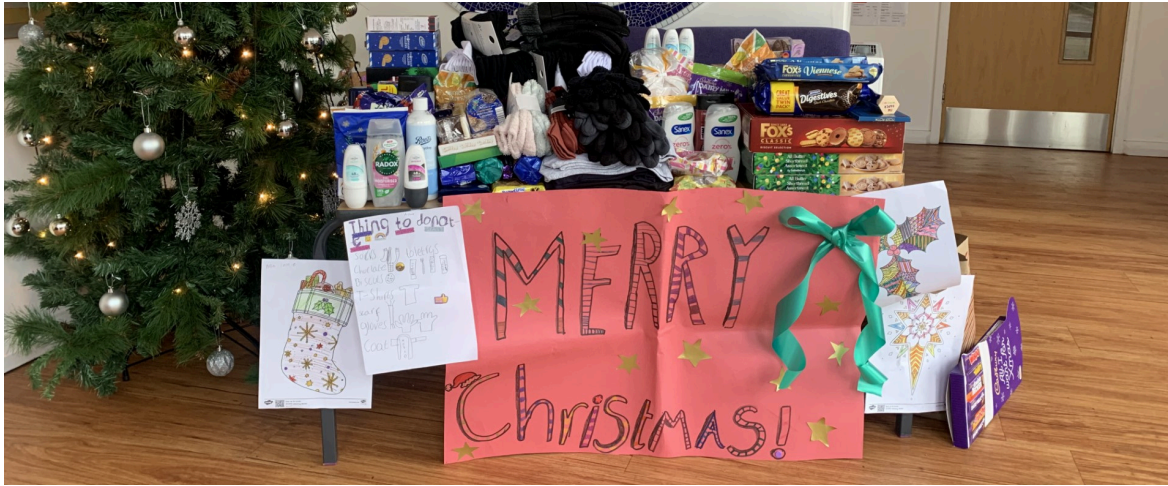
When Crossways closed, we were able to place 'M' in alternative emergency accommodation, funded by the City Council from the central government's Rough Sleeping Initiative, until a room became available at Jimmy's assessment centre. Her aim is to secure a place in a modular home or supported move-on house.

Donations & Other Support

Much of the food used at Crossways was donated from organisations like Buckingham Emergency Food Appeal, Cambridge Sustainable Food, Cambridge Foodbank and directly from supermarkets. Partnerships like this are valuable in cutting food waste by using short shelf-life products.

St Andrew's Church Chesterton once again organised daily deliveries of bread and milk. We were also delighted to receive donations of food, Christmas presents and other personal items from pupils at St Bede's Inter-Church and St Luke's Schools, as a result of outreach work by our Housekeeping

Coordinator and trustees, and CCHP. Embrace, a university student group, organised donation drives in five colleges.



Pupils at St Luke's C of E Primary School collected for Crossways

Other donors included New Life Church, St Barnabas, comfort packs from Touch Of Sparkle and Royston Radio, mobile phones and tablets from SustainableTech4Good, Christmas gift bags from the Companions of the Order of Malta, and digital radios from WaveLength.

We were grateful to Mawson Rd Community Orchestra, Cam FM and Lush Cambridge for financial support via fundraising events, and a generous donation from Crofton Engineering Ltd.

Case Study: T's Story



'T' is in her 30s and had been a guest at Crossways in a previous winter. Our team had worked with 'T' to support her aim of moving into self-contained accommodation. However, she struggled to move away from street life and felt that she wasn't ready to accept an offer of self-contained accommodation when it was made.

The Street Outreach Team (SOT) were determined that 'T' would not spend another winter out and brought her situation to the attention of the Team Around the Person (TAP) meetings, an initiative from the City Council, of which Crossways are a member.

This partnership working reassured 'T' and she expressed a desire to come back to Crossways, where our team noticed a greater willingness to accept support.

The CGL Heart Team were able to arrange for 'T' to enter a script programme and she became a popular presence with guests and staff, joining in with activities and talking about her plans for the future.

Shortly before Crossways closed, 'T' was fast tracked into Jimmy's 451 project, which provides specialist support for individuals with complex needs and/or multiple disadvantages, as it was recognised there had been a significant positive change in her determination to move on.

TAP meetings for 'T' continue to ensure that her move to 451 is successful and our Survive and Thrive service is available to supplement the extensive support she receives in her new accommodation.

Activities

'Music therapy is a safe space for self-expression. This creative and emotional outlet could offer a different experience to guests' everyday routines, fostering a greater sense of community through shared music-making. It is also a fun way for positive relationships to build' **Gwen, Music Therapist**

We continued to develop a programme of activities for guests, giving them opportunities to try new things, talk about their experiences in a calm, relaxed setting and build relationships with facilitators, staff and other guests.



Emma and Paul from Earth And Mind with Chris

Sessions included cookery and baking lead by Sam from Cambridge Sustainable Food, (the muffins were a hit!), Earth and Mind's Emma and Paul who ran a herb planter workshop and a series of weekly music 'jams' facilitated by Gwen from ARU Music Therapy Dept.

Case Study: K's Story



'K' is an elderly man in his late 60s, originally from China. Following separation from his wife, 'K' became estranged from his extended family and ended up sleeping on the streets of Cambridge.

'K's health had declined significantly when he was found by the Street Outreach Team (SOT). 'K' was fast tracked into Crossways due to his physical condition and vulnerability. Having access to regular nutrition and his own room, 'K' began to put on weight and engage with those around him, as noted by our team, guests and volunteers. He also enjoyed engaging with the baking and gardening activity sessions held at Crossways.

Requiring cooperation from his estranged family in order to secure full settled status in the UK, our support team made contact with members of the family. While 'K' left us when Crossways closed, to move in with friends to whom he would act as a carer (he had previously worked within the care sector), the contact initiated with his family should enable him to now complete the Settled Status application process.

After The Doors Close

'Thank you so much for the food and household supplies. Lifesaver.' **D, Crossways resident moved into CCC Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) property.**

Our support for guests does not end when we close the doors at Crossways. There is no point in helping people, many of whom have spent years on the streets, if they are simply left to struggle in next stage accommodation.

Our Survive & Thrive service continued to support guests who had stayed at Crossways during winter 2022-23, drawing upon our extensive network of community groups.



Food parcels provide continuing support

Support offered included provision of food parcels or arrangement of deliveries of pre-cooked food, accompanying to interviews for alternative accommodation or volunteering opportunities, facilitating access to legal advice with partner agencies, and assistance with laundry.

Particularly with guests who had moved into self-contained or small shared accommodation, we undertook welfare checks in addition to those made by regular support workers. On several occasions concerns about visitors to properties, the state of properties, or the health of those receiving support were fed back by our Survive & Thrive team to the appropriate partner agency.

Contact

It takes a city to end homelessness. If you are a local business, community, student, faith group or an individual who would like to support our work with donations, fundraising events, volunteering, or in any other way, please get in touch.



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