



# CROSSWAYS



## WINTER EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT REPORT 2025-26

It Takes a City (Cambridge), c/o St Andrews Street Baptist Church, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3 AR  
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'Roy' arrived at Crossways in November 2025, having fled from another region of the UK due to serious threats of violence. Upon arrival, he was anxious, depressed, untrusting and struggling to engage with our support staff.

Roy's childhood was marked by hardship and abuse. In his teenage years, he was recruited, exploited and coerced into a notorious gang, where he carried out illegal activities, often involving violence.

Roy endured decades of prison sentences, reoffending, and unstable housing. He lacked support and meaningful relationships, unable to break free from the gangs where he felt 'owned'.

After settling into Crossways and expressing a sense of belonging, Roy's confidence began to grow. He often spoke about wanting to change his life, leave behind his past and look for a happy and settled future.

Read the rest of Roy's and other stories of how Crossways has supported people on their journey from street to home by visiting our [website](#).



**42** individuals provided with accommodation



**37** individuals accommodated in regular rooms



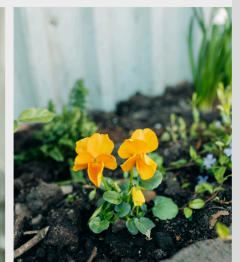
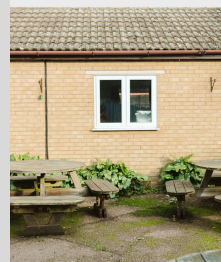
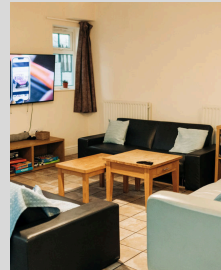
**5** women accommodated in regular rooms



**5** people accommodated solely during SWEP periods



**23** people supported into next stage accommodation



**It Takes A City (ITAC) ran the winter emergency accommodation project at Crossways for a fifth year from 10/11/25 to 31/03/26.**

*'I don't know what I would do without all the support you have provided. I feel so lucky to have been able to start my journey at Crossways'* **A Guest.**

A contract from Cambridge City Council and funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provided funding for the project.

Once again, faith groups, schools, businesses, university students, and many others supported the project through donations of food, warm clothing, footwear, personal items, and refurbished phones. All felt confident that we would make best use of their donations.

20 bedrooms with private bathroom facilities, most en-suite, were available every day, plus 3 emergency pop-up beds during SWEPP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) periods.

The project was staffed Monday to Friday by a team of experienced ITAC support workers alongside Evolve Security guards who were on site 24/7. Our Volunteer Coordinator was usually in attendance at the weekend providing support to our security team and volunteers alike.

Many guests had complex needs, with physical and mental health challenges. At Crossways, as with all our services, we work in a way that is trauma informed. We believe this helps us develop individual relationships based upon trust and contributes to the unique sense of community.

For many people, our staff become their Trusted Person. The support we provide means we can prevent people being re-traumatised by having to repeat their stories to multiple agencies. This gives them the space to focus on achieving lasting change.

**If your organisation would like to find out how they can support our work, please email [info@itac.org.uk](mailto:info@itac.org.uk)**

## Making A Difference

*'Volunteering at Crossways felt like being part of a family. I was welcomed and got stuck into all sorts of things. It was a great way to learn new skills, have fun and make a real difference. I would definitely recommend it and hope to be back next winter'* **Jack.**



**93** individuals volunteered to support the project



**2200+** hours given by those volunteers

### Volunteers assisted with tasks including:

- preparation and serving of cooked evening meals
- cleaning of communal areas and vacated bedrooms
- renovating the courtyard garden
- weekend daytime cover alongside our security team
- providing companionship for guests
- stock management of donated items
- redecorating rooms and corridors



This year, we employed an in-house Volunteer Coordinator to work with our amazing team of volunteers. Their role was to train and rota the volunteer team who provided additional support alongside that offered by our staff. Volunteers were recruited from churches, student societies, local businesses and via our website.

Many volunteers have become familiar and welcome faces around the project, returning year on year, showing how much they value and enjoy the experience. Regular as clockwork, Sue and Malc continued to support us in preparing rooms and keeping communal areas in good order, whilst handyman Ed Cowdrith was always on call with his toolbox and headful of practical ideas.

*'It has been a real inspiration to see some of the guests willing to lend a hand in the kitchen. Many come to Crossways in difficult situations, but I met people with a desire to leave the past behind and build a new life'. Ben.*

Several local businesses also supported the project with time, people and passion. A group from accountancy firm PEM spent a day cleaning and making rooms ready for the arrival of our guests.

Shortly after the project closed in April, teams from The Cambridge Building Society and Cogentia Healthcare Consulting rolled up their sleeves to give the rooms, corridors and pergola a much-needed refresh. Their hard work will help provide a welcoming environment for people who often arrive in great distress.

Professional gardener, Suzie Nicholson, supported our guests in an ongoing project to make the courtyard garden a lovely space for everyone to chill out and spend time in.

*'I have really enjoyed being involved with Crossways and ITAC. I have felt really included and valued working with Barry and some of the residents to transform the outdoors space. It has been such a valuable experience to understand the complexities of homelessness and the amazing work ITAC undertakes'. Suzie.*

## Partnering For Success

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*'Ending homelessness in Cambridge isn't a task for one organisation alone, it's a shared responsibility. By working in partnership, we combine knowledge, resources and compassion to create lasting pathways out of homelessness. Crossways is a fantastic example of collaboration, providing accommodation and support, thus offering the stability to enable people to leave the streets for good' Simon Penn, Cambridge City Council.*

Many of those who we accommodated had been disengaged from services for significant periods. Our support team, working in a trauma informed way, would regularly advocate for our guests, liaising with specialist agencies on their behalf. Where possible, we would ask these agencies to visit Crossways. Alternatively, we accompanied guests to external appointments, helping them navigate sometimes confusing systems.



The CGL Street Outreach Team identified rough sleepers in the city and ensured they were fully assessed for risk and support needs before being offered a place at the project.

Worker assisted GP appointments at the Cambridge Access Surgery (CAS), a practice that specialises in supporting those who are currently experiencing or have recently experienced homelessness, continued to provide an important role in addressing people’s health needs.

Cambridge City Council have a housing adviser working with rough sleepers and their regular visits provided invaluable support to guests and staff alike.

Gary from Cambridgeshire County Council’s Smoking Cessation Team ran weekly on-site sessions throughout the winter, including training so that our staff could provide ongoing encouragement for our guests.

We were pleased to have visits from a local optician and a dental hygienist, both services that those sleeping rough often find difficult to access.

*‘It was a pleasure to spend time with your team and speak with residents about oral health. Learning more about the support you provide for people experiencing homelessness was inspiring’* **Shelley Belgrove, Clinical Director and co-founder at Well:o.**

## A Community Effort

*‘Amazed at the generosity of so many companies in the city. Arrived back to our hostel to be greeted by some guests who saw me unloading and were blown away by the fact there will be gifts on Christmas Day. Exact quote unprintable!’* **Lis Silver, ITAC CEO**

Once again, the community answered our call, holding events to raise funds, organising office collections, going above and beyond to support our work. Here are a few examples.



Increased support from the Cambridge business sector demonstrated the growing recognition of our work.

Relationships were strengthened by our staff’s willingness to attend events and speak passionately about the power of partnership in making real change for our guests.

PEM, Bidwells and three branches of The Cambridge Building Society organised Christmas Giving Tree campaigns.

Buckingham Emergency Food Appeal (BEFA) continued their regular deliveries of fresh fruit, vegetables and other essentials, as did Cambridge Sustainable Food (CSF). St Andrew's Church, Chesterton once again provided us with our daily milk and bread. They also collected unsold baked goods from Tesco for our guests to enjoy. Partnerships like this help in cutting food waste.

The amazing Cambridge Chorale invited us to their carol concert at St Andrew's Street Baptist Church for a second year, whilst Colleen Sheridan and her merry band dressed to the max and treated shoppers to some fine festive jazz whilst raising funds for us.

In January, we were invited to address the audience and collect donations at a concert given by the Sampson Orchestra of Cambridge.

Sophie Pearson and her colleagues at Costello Medical donated funds and food items. Our friend and Chaplain at Trinity College, Sophie Young, helped students organise a collection of presents at Christmas and mini gift baskets at Easter.

Outreach visits from our team, addressing whole school assemblies about the importance of kindness and supporting those in need in their community, lead to donations of food and clothing throughout the winter.

*'I feel strongly that we should consider ourselves very lucky and think of those who are less fortunate. I am committed that as a school we try to do as much as possible to support others- hence our donations.'* **Headteacher, Holme Court School**

## Those Extras Touches

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Our guests appreciated activities that provided an opportunity to spend time together, learn new skills, visit places they may previously have considered out of bounds or simply to feel cared for.



Professional gardener, Suzie Nicholson, was a regular visitor, volunteering her time to lead horticultural activities such as a wreath making workshop.

Residents enjoyed a guided tour of Cambridge Botanical Gardens, where expert horticulturalist Louise was able to give them lots of ideas for making the best of the conditions in the courtyard garden.

Weekly music therapy sessions again formed part of our programme courtesy of Jan, a student from Anglia Ruskin University.

Just before Christmas, Hamza from First Cut volunteered his time and expertise to provide haircuts for our guests, boosting the confidence of those that can rarely access such services whilst on the streets.



'Brian' is in his 50s and had stayed at Crossways during a previous winter. He then moved on into a shared house.

While in the shared accommodation he was targeted by a group of individuals engaged in street-based activities. They would stay at his property against his wishes and obtain money from him.

He was moved to alternative accommodation, a placement that broke down, resulting in him returning to the streets, where he was a regular begging presence.

Unwilling to accept accommodation with any other providers, Brian was offered the chance to return to Crossways which had essentially become the only place that he would accept.

Brian had suffered from poor physical health, with knee problems impacting his mobility. Encouraged by Crossways staff, he engaged much more with the local access surgery around his health needs and continued to work with the local recovery service to address his substance use.

As the end of winter approached, and we grew concerned that Brian had no move-on option, we approached Cambridge City Council and received encouragement to make a homeless application.

Granted a priority housing duty by the Council, Brian met the criteria to be accommodated at our new 176 summer provision. Therefore, he was able to stay in his room and simply had to sign a new accommodation agreement.

Brian has been awarded a priority banding for bidding on Home-link to secure a social tenancy. Once a tenancy is secured, our Survive and Thrive service will assist him to furnish his new property, set up the accounts for all his household bills, and offer any other forms of support that he might need.

As our name clearly indicates, we strongly believe that 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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