



THE HAVEN

2024-2026 Impact Report

The following is a report marking the second anniversary of The Haven, a project run by It Takes A City (ITAC), providing support for homeless, marginally housed and at-risk women in Cambridge. The report covers the period from June 2024 to May 2026.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

51 Women supported

191 Nights open

A year of big wins & unique challenges

Between 17 June 2024-1 May 2026, The Haven has seen incredible growth in the support it provides to homeless, marginally housed and at-risk women in Cambridge. The majority of women we have seen come through our doors reported to regularly sleeping rough on their initial visit and would have done so on the night if they had not been able to use our service. By working in partnership with other providers, the Haven has been delighted to see many of these women move into temporary accommodation or hostels and the balance in accommodation status has changed dramatically over the past 24 months.

Currently, The Haven is seeing many women who are marginally housed continuing to use the service, as they value the support and sense of community the environment offers. We are actively seeking new ways to support these women in retaining their tenancies and promoting their safety, security, and overall well-being.

THE HAVEN

is an overnight, trauma-informed, safe drop-in space for homeless and at-risk women in the centre of Cambridge. Most visitors are rough sleepers or marginally housed, with many seeking respite at the Haven from abusive or coercive relationships. The space offers a quiet resting place with food, washing facilities, clothing, toiletries and hygiene products, as well as conversation, advice, and emotional support from the all-female staff.

The project is staffed by an experienced, trauma-informed support worker, SIA-accredited security guard, and trained volunteers. The Haven provides support for women with complex needs, including severe mental and physical health issues, substance abuse, and trauma, while maintaining a sense of dignity for the women it serves.



CHALLENGES

The 'Hidden Homeless' Population

National data shows that women are disproportionately affected by violence and that violence is a common cause of homelessness. This can lead to 'hidden homelessness' where women are forced to find hidden sleeping sites, sofa surf, sleep in cars/buses, rely on sex work or remain in 'survival partnerships' to avoid sleeping on the streets. Additionally, women are often reluctant to use mixed-gender services because of experiences of abuse or violence and will therefore not receive the critical support they need.

20%

of women who have experienced violence become homeless

Women's Rough Sleeping Census

Conducted in Cambridge in 2025, the Women's Rough Sleeping census confirmed national data that women make up a large part of the 'hidden homeless' population. Organisations across Cambridge, including ITAC, participated in the census working with the Street Outreach Team to identify 18 homeless women in the city, compared to previous methods which indicated only 4 (in 2024). As is evident, the hidden nature of women's homelessness results in underreporting and creates challenges in delivering consistent support to those in need.

35%

of homeless people in Cambridge are **female**

from 2024 Women's Rough Sleeping Census

OUR IMPACT (IN NUMBERS)

ON ARRIVAL

Over the past two years, the Haven has supported **51** individuals. This was made up of a combination of women who were regular visitors and those who visited for just a small number of nights. On their initial visit to the Haven, a large majority of women (66%) were regularly rough sleeping and would have slept rough that night if they had not been able to access the service.

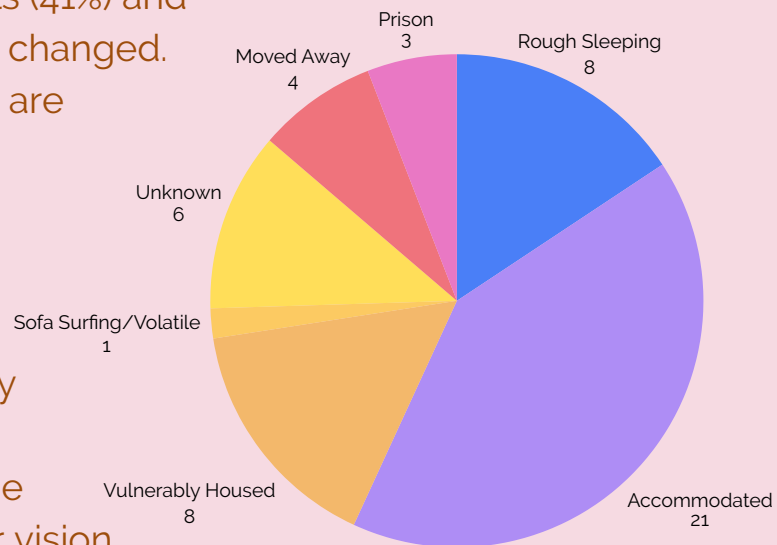


TWO YEARS LATER

MAY 2026

In the past 2 years, we have seen a remarkable and steady progression of women who have moved into private or temporary accommodation and/or hostels (41%) and the balance in accommodation status has changed. Many of the women with accommodation are still living street-based lifestyles and may be in accommodation where they do not feel very safe or well supported.

As a result, The Haven is now seeing many women who are marginally housed continuing to use the service, as they value the support and community provided. Our vision for the future is to continue supporting these women in retaining their tenancies while provide continuity of wraparound support with other services in the city.



STORIES FROM THE HAVEN

Row's Story

Row accessed the Haven in October of 2025 after being referred by the City Council. Row had made a disclosure of **domestic abuse** by her partner. Because of her immigration status she was not entitled to emergency housing (as she had no recourse to public funding). **Row was in an impossible position** – unable to leave the UK and unable to claim asylum.

When Row first visited the Haven staff provided a safe comfortable space and allowed her to settle with very little questioning until she felt more comfortable with. After several visits and a **trauma-informed approach** to her needs, staff were able to gain Row's trust and consent to understand the complexities of her case.

With the help of Women's Aid, Haven staff were able to identify and manage Row's situation as **a case of female trafficking**. The Haven worked with other services on Row's case and were transparent at every step of the process, so she felt included in decisions. With the collaboration of other services, **Row is now free from her trafficker** and in **safe, specialised, and secure accommodation** in another city.



Kate's Story

Kate came to the Haven in the summer 2025 to escape **unliveable mould conditions in her flat** (an ongoing issue unaddressed by her housing officer due to communication breakdown). She was living outside her flat for most hours of the day and night when possible, as the **conditions posed a significant threat** to her physical and mental well-being.

Kate's family members all live abroad, and her **health issues included limited mobility** which made attending medical appointments challenging. She had also accrued some significant debt from hotel and taxi bills, services she needed due to her living conditions and mobility issues. In addition to her physical disabilities, Kate also struggles with **mental health issues**, which were quite severe when she first came to the Haven.

Through the help of the Haven, Kate has received support from staff in helping to manage her affairs with the council housing, attend medical appointments; she has had access to the **space to shower, do washing, and receive support** from the staff.

'I was in a dark place when I first came here,' she says, **'but the Haven has given me hope. I was treated like a human here, not a statistic.'**



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



University Engagement

Student societies Embrace and Gender Agenda held an event on International Women's Day (8 March) highlighting the challenging reality of homelessness for women. The event was designed to highlight the work of the Haven and to present research, perspective from frontline services, and facilitate discussion groups toward coordinated action.

The Haven's Women's Service Coordinator spoke about her experience working with homeless and at-risk women in Cambridge, how homelessness uniquely affects women, barriers around providing gender-specific services for women, and the stigmas/stereotypes surrounding homelessness. All proceeds from the event went to support The Haven project.



Local Theatre Supports The Haven

Emma Reeves' adaptation of Little Women ran from 3-7 March 2026 at the ADC Theatre in Cambridge and chose to raise funds to support The Haven. ITAC raised over £400 for The Haven across the week of showings.



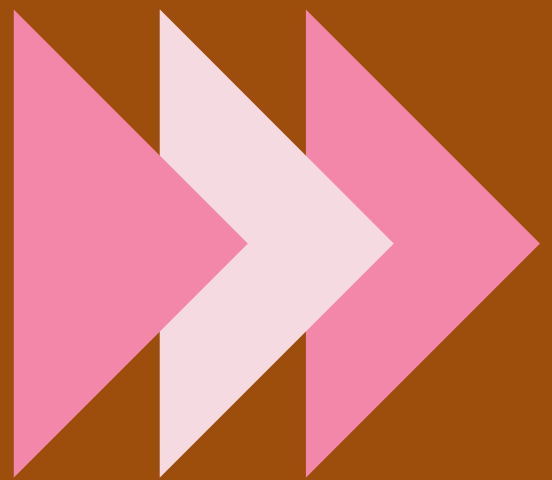
THANK YOU

to all our donors and volunteers.

These past 2 years, the Haven has been supported with over 50 women volunteers, donations of clothes, toiletries, and other items to the project, student fundraisers, and thousands of pounds in funding from trusts and individuals.

The work of the Haven could not be possible without your support.

Thank you for making it a reality.



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