

Crossways Report 2022-23



With funding provided by Cambridge City Council and DLUHC, It Takes a City (ITAC) managed the 24/7 winter emergency accommodation project at Crossways for a second year, (01/11/22 to 31/03/23). The service provided 20 en-suite bedrooms every day throughout this five-month period, plus 3 emergency beds during SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) periods.

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



Paddy (Evolve Guards) and Chris (ITAC)

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

Working in partnership with other organisations and over 100 fantastic volunteers, our guests were provided with access to food and drinks throughout the day, a hot evening meal, laundry service and access to specialist services.

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

We have secured use of the current property for the next two years, with thanks to CATS Education.

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

- **20 rough sleepers supported off the street each night from 01/11/22 to 31/03/23**
- **49 rough sleepers (38 in regular beds and 11 SWEP guests) were supported during the winter.**
- **40 rough sleepers ended their rough sleeping by moving on into suitable second stage accommodation.**

Here's what our guests had to say about their time at Crossways.

'I've made friends here' A

'I will miss everyone when it's over' M

'I've been welcomed and looked after in a way that's been heart-warming' R

'If I could I'd stay here forever. Being here has saved my life.' M

'I love it here. I feel safe here. I'm going to miss everyone when it closes' A

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F's Story

'F' was a man in his 40s who had spent 28 years, all his adult life, homeless and on the streets of Cambridge. 'F' had a history of IV drug use and was conscious that his uncontrolled diabetes was leading to rapidly declining physical health.

During the COVID pandemic, 'F' had spent some time living in self-contained accommodation and demonstrated an ability to live unassisted.

'F' was known to the Crossways team who, when he arrived at the project, observed a significant change in his mindset and determination to address his issues.

The Crossways team felt 'F' would be suitable for a property via the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Project (RSAP). Although there were some initial concerns, when the RSAP team interviewed 'F' they were impressed by his change in outlook and willingness to work with support agencies.

'F' has now been housed and is looking forward to a better future.

Volunteers Change Lives

ITAC partnered with community organisations including the Cambridge Churches Homelessness Project (CCHP), student societies and individuals to recruit a volunteer team of 120 people to supplement the support offered by ITAC and security staff. Volunteers at the project assisted in a variety of tasks that included:

- preparation and serving of cooked evening meals
- cleaning of communal areas and vacated bedrooms
- weekend daytime cover at the project and companionship when required for residents
- stock management of donated food, clothes, toiletries and other key consumables.
- weekly visits from a therapy dog

The significant number of people who volunteered for a second year indicated that they valued and enjoyed the experience.



'I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of this amazing project and meeting such incredible people along the way. Those that have organised and taken part in it deserve a massive pat on the back. I have been privileged to meet and hear the stories of the guests and I wish them all the best for the future. I hope that the people of Cambridge continue to give them support and respect and that the future ahead is more settled for them.' **B** (regular volunteer having just moved to Cambridge)

'I am very glad that I volunteered there, it felt like a really worthwhile use of my time. The other volunteers were friendly and my conversations with the residents were an eye-opening experience.' — **B** (Student)

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'Helping at Crossways was a great experience for me. It was a great way to get out of the student bubble and really opened my eyes to how communities can come together to support those who need it most.' — **M** (Student).

'We understand that even the smallest acts of kindness can make a world of difference to the guests at Crossways' — **S & M** (regular volunteers)



L's Story

'L,' in her late teens, was the youngest guest at Crossways this Winter. 'L' was kicked out of the family home by her father because of her sexuality. She had moved to Cambridge from Peterborough to be with her partner, but things did not go well.

'L's previous chaotic behaviour and binge drinking led to her being excluded from young people's projects in the city. The Crossways team agreed to offer 'L' a room whilst all avenues of support were explored.

Intensive work, in partnership with local youth services, led to 'L' being offered a place in a specialist, female only accommodation project, where she would receive appropriate support.

'L' is now looking forward to a future where she can return to her studies at Cambridge Regional College.

Partnership In Action

We simply could not have created the unique culture at Crossways without support from many partner organisations.

Specialist agencies visited the project 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 that provides health services to those experiencing homelessness.

The availability of these services on site enabled those residents who struggled to keep external appointments to receive the specialist support they required.

"Crossways has been a fantastic resource for rough sleepers and services such as ours. The staff, such as Chris and Emma, are trusted colleagues, whom we rely on to deliver our service."

Graham Murray, Mental Health Nurse, DDSP Team Leader

'I wish that this hostel could become a permanent setting for the homeless in Cambridge. The impact that your hostel has is amazing and it has the friendliest feeling.'

Dr Justin Markiewicz, CGL

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Donations and Other Support

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

St Andrew's Chesterton organised daily deliveries of bread and milk. We were also delighted to receive a donation of food and other personal items by pupils at St Bede's Inter-Church School.

Other donors included New Life Church, St Barnabas and over 300 pairs of socks and underwear provided by Bare Necessities, mobile phones and tablets from Laptops4Learning and Christmas gift bags from the Companions of the Order of Malta.



Grants from Cambridge Street Aid and other funding was obtained for many of the residents providing them with essentials including new glasses, clothing for severe weather, footwear, phones.

Help was also provided where needed to work towards obtaining settled status including support for a trip to Peterborough to get a European passport.

An Unbreakable Bond

We know how strong the bond can be between those experiencing homelessness and their animal companions. Indeed, some would rather stay on the streets than accept an offer of accommodation that did not include their dog.

We worked in partnership with Dogs Trust to make Crossways dog friendly and were delighted to receive accreditation, following a visit from Abigail Owens.



'Working with Chris and Lis was an absolute pleasure. It was clear from the beginning they were enthusiastic about our scheme and were keen to implement policies and procedures that allowed them to welcome dogs into the service'

Abigail Owens, Dogs Trust Pets and Housing Regional Engagement Coordinator