

Let's keep talking to end homelessness, summit urges

A film detailing the experiences of two homeless individuals who attend Wintercomfort were an integral element of the Cambridge Summit on Homelessness held last November.

The event, which attracted almost 200 people, was convened by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, with the aim of urging groups to work collaboratively to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping in Cambridge.

The hope is that conversations begun at the summit will continue between all sections of the community and lead to action and lasting change for homeless individuals in Cambridge - a city with so much wealth and increasing inequality.

Jon Canessa, the Bishop of Ely's Adviser for Homelessness, Wintercomfort's Chaplain and lead organiser of the summit, said: "I have worked with homeless people for several years and believe one person sleeping on our streets is one too many in 2018."

"The problems associated with homelessness cannot be fixed at Westminster or be left at the doorstep of the local authority. Real change is possible if we come together and work as a city across business, public and community spheres. We hope this summit is the start of the city coming together"



Overstream News

SPRING 2019

wintercomfort
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Sarah's Welcome



This welcome has been a real challenge to write. Overstream House – our day centre – is never quiet and is rarely without change, so I'm not sure where to start.

On Christmas Day, we were joined by more than 35 people,

who enjoyed a full Christmas dinner, complete with presents. The Mayor of Cambridge, Nigel Gawthrope, came along, and it was with real sadness that we learned of his death shortly after while diving in South Africa. He was always very supportive of our work, and he will be sorely missed by many in Cambridge. We send our thoughts and condolences to his family and friends.

Since I last wrote my welcome column, we have secured further National Lottery funding to support our pivotal Learning and Development project, extra cash to purchase a new van to replace our bright pink hearse to support our social enterprises, and we received a huge response from our supporters to our Christmas Appeal.

Here at Wintercomfort, we are in the business of helping individuals make change a reality – to move on from homelessness. To underline this, we have included our 2017-18 Annual Review, which details our performance and our stand-out achievements. Try to imagine the

people we support behind those numbers. For example, the 52 unique individuals we have supported back into employment or the 25 people completing our Overstream Clean training course. For many, engaging in work-based training for the first time or after a long period out of work, is a nerve-racking experience.

I may have alluded to this already, but without our dedicated, highly professional and empathetic team of staff and volunteers, Wintercomfort would not be able to make the difference that it does every day, seven days a week.

Continuing on the themes of dedication, professionalism and empathy, James Martin, our Services Manager since 2011, has left Wintercomfort to take up the Director role with Cambridge Cyrenians. I know he will continue that excellent work with Cyrenians. We have appointed and welcomed Donna-Louise Cobban as Services Manager into our team. More about Donna-Louise in our 'Five minutes with...' article on page 4.

There is much more I could write but, for now, let me end by sharing the fact that I am constantly humbled by the work delivered at Wintercomfort and, if I may, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support. We have a busy 2019 ahead of us.

With best wishes

Sarah Halls
Chief Executive – Wintercomfort for the homeless

What is your proudest achievement in life so far?

Personally, it's completing my first half-marathon last year and going on to train for more this year. Workwise, being awarded a six-figure sum of money to expand my team in an Older People's Mental Health NHS trust and working with NHS managers and psychiatrists to develop the service for older people.

How do you spend your free time?

Running! Plus spending time with my close friends, of course.

What is your favourite book/film/music?

Book: One Day by David Nicholls
Film: Silver Linings Playbook
Music: anything by Snow Patrol or Paul Weller

Tell us something about you we don't know.

I co-led a research project with colleagues from the Health and Social Care Faculty at the University of Bedfordshire into how older people's social networks change after a diagnosis of dementia; I even got named on the research paper!

What would you take with you to a desert island?

Sunscreen, my camera and my phone.

What is your philosophy for life?

I love the spirit of Roald Dahl and identify with this quote: "I think probably kindness is my number one attribute in a human being. I'll put it before any of the things like courage or bravery or generosity or anything else." Kindness and compassion are so important in the world we live in today and are at the centre of my own values and what I value in others.

What is the best part of your job/role here at Wintercomfort?

Lots of things! Seeing the difference we can make to people, whether it is a listening ear, some compassion or bringing a sense of respect and human contact to those who are often without these things. Seeing someone change after having a hearty breakfast and getting some new clothes and toiletries – all the little things we take for granted are so important to the people we support.

What makes you want to work at Wintercomfort?

Being able to use my previous skills and experience of managing and developing support services combined with my love of volunteering for Crisis (the national homeless charity) makes me want to be able to support the team to ensure we keep making a positive difference to our service users.



Five minutes with Donna-Louise Cobban, Services Manager

Donna-Louise joins us from her role as Advice Service Manager at Anglia Ruskin University Students' Union. Her team supported more than 1,200 students a year with a variety of academic and wellbeing problems. She worked closely with ARU colleagues to bring about positive change for students, including working on the campaign for better support for those students affected by sexual violence on campus.

She joins Wintercomfort at an important and busy time, so her skills, expertise and knowledge will be a real asset to Wintercomfort's work.

What's your role at Wintercomfort?

I am responsible for all the support services we offer at Wintercomfort. I oversee the work of the Project Workers and Volunteers who run our various welfare and educational activities.

Your donation really will change lives. wintercomfort.org.uk

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New wheels for Overstream Clean

We were delighted to receive a capital-funding grant from Morrisons Foundation UK to buy a new van. Sadly, this means that we have had to part with our legendary bright pink hearse that has served us very well but had reached the end of its useful life.

The new van will support the on-going success and growth of Overstream Clean, as we continue to provide more commercial cleaning opportunities and gardening work. It's six seats mean we can offer more opportunities for team cleans.

Morrisons Foundation UK was keen to support Overstream Clean following the completion our 2017 report that demonstrated the significant social impact achieved by getting people into employment and training.

The van's size also allows us to use it for service user outings and activities; our project workers recently took a group to Bury St Edmunds for a free show at the Theatre Royal, marking the theatre's 200th anniversary.



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Alicia's story



How Wintercomfort has helped restore the confidence of a woman forced to take refuge in Cambridge from her abusive husband.

It was something as simple as spotting a poster for Overstream Clean's training course that has helped Alicia – made homeless after fleeing an abusive relationship – to turn her life around and overcome her fear of men.

Alicia found herself in Cambridge two years ago with just a few personal items and initially 'sofa surfed' with friends, but the instability caused her stress and anxiety. After a time, however, she was offered a place in a Cambridge refuge and was able to move into a 'move on' house 18 months ago.

While there, Alicia saw the poster advertising Overstream Clean's six-week training course. The course teaches cleaning to a professional level delivered by our in-house team. Although she wasn't completely ready for work at that stage, she felt she needed to engage with something positive.

Having suffered years of abuse from her husband, Alicia was wary at first and needed to make sure the course was safe and if there were other women taking part. She met

Elliot, Overstream Clean's Supervisor and Trainer, who offered immediate reassurance and encouragement.

Alicia said: "I was really nervous and I had to channel my inner fear of men. The environment on the training course really helped me to move beyond this issue. Elliot was calm, encouraging and very supportive of me completing the course and, at the end, he offered me a paid role.

"My confidence has grown massively. I couldn't believe it when I was offered paid employment, Elliot was really encouraging to all of us on the course. People are so judgemental about homelessness, but the reality is that it can happen to any of us – it's dangerous and horrible."

"I had been cleaning at Centre 33 – another brilliant charity supporting young people – but my journey really began here at Overstream House, helping me to overcome the fear that I had of new places where there were men. I never dreamt that things would work out so positively."

Alicia has been working for Overstream Clean for a year and is currently living in 'move on' accommodation that supports women who are homeless and fleeing abusive relationships. Confidence growing, she is now doing a college course

Without her role with Overstream Clean, she believes she would struggle to get back into employment.

"It's giving me purpose and an opportunity to contribute once again," she said. "I have not been trained in previous cleaning roles and this really makes me think that Overstream is better than our competitors because of the training. I have just completed my first aid training course, which is another opportunity offered by Wintercomfort."

Alicia now hopes to secure a full-time role working in cleaning, possibly in a hospital. Thanks to Wintercomfort, being part of a team has become important to her and she now enjoys being surrounded by other people.

Farewell James

We said farewell to our Services Manager, James Martin, at the end of February, as he moved on to take up the role of Director at Cambridge Cyrenians.

James joined Wintercomfort in 2011; before then, he worked at Riverside housing and a number of other homelessness service providers in Cambridge. During his seven years at Wintercomfort, we saw huge changes including: the move to a seven-day service; the launch of Overstream Clean; and a number of big construction jobs, including a new roof.

A celebratory lunch was held for service users, volunteers and staff to wish him well. James was hugely successful during his time at Wintercomfort and he remains very popular with our service users.

Sarah Halls, Chief Executive of Wintercomfort, said: "We are exceptionally grateful to James for his years as Services Manager. He was always compassionate and driven to make change a reality for everyone that came through our doors. We wish him well in his new role at Cyrenians, an organisation that we work very closely with here."

James said: "It has been a privilege to work at Wintercomfort. I wanted a new challenge and this was an excellent opportunity to work for another great charity making a difference for people in need. I have been so very proud of all that was achieved during my time at Overstream House, and I am sure the great work will continue."



Fundraising update



Running total

A huge big thank you to the Wintercomfort Half Marathon team which took part in the 2019 Cambridge Half Marathon. The six runners raised a fantastic **£2,688.77** to support our work here at Overstream House.

We will be looking for a team of 20 to run on our behalf in 2020. If you are interested in getting involved, please email fundraising@wintercomfort.org.uk

High Sheriff's cash boost

We were delighted to receive a grant of **£1,500** from the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire to enable us to continue our weekly coffee and cake session with students from the Cambridge Homeless Outreach Project. Wintercomfort staff have been providing training to the students.

The group has just completed a photography exhibition that went on display during early March. The photographs were all taken by Wintercomfort service users and explored issues connected with homelessness in Cambridge.



High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire, Dr Andy Harter CBE; Deputy Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Lily Bacon; and TV presenter, Carol Vorderman MBE. Wintercomfort chair of trustees, Sarah Forman; Overstream Clean operative, Michael Dellow; and fundraiser Simon Pickering at the High Sheriff Awards 2019.

Success on a plate

We were delighted to receive a record **£9,528** from the teams at Cambiscuisine's restaurants who raised this through all their hard work during 2018.

Events included multiple coffee mornings, sales of the 2019 Pudding calendar and a selected number of menu items in all their lovely restaurants.

The good news is that the teams at all of Cambiscuisine's restaurants are doing it all again this year, so please come along and join us for a morning of coffee and cakes on the following dates:

- **Cambridge Chop House**, 1 King's Parade on **Friday 17th May 9:30-11:30am**
- **Smokeworks Station Road** on **Friday 5th July 8.30 – 11:00am**
- **Smokeworks Station road** on **Thursday 10th October 8:30 -11:00am**

Cambridge Concert Orchestra will be performing a family classical concert to raise funds for Wintercomfort. Saturday 13th July, 5-7pm

Venue: Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge CB3 0DG
Tickets from our office: 01223 518 140 or email: fundraising@wintercomfort.org.uk
£10 per adult £3 for children

