

Annual review

2018/2019

winter
comfort
opening doors



Wintercomfort: opening doors for Colin

Colin's life was turned on its head after the breakdown of his marriage rendered him homeless. This is the story of how, with the help available at Wintercomfort, he was able to rebuild stability in his life and find hope for the future



Nearly three years ago, after a sudden difficulty in his marriage, Colin had to leave his home and was faced with a prospect that was entirely alien: he was homeless.

"It hit me hard," he says. "I've always had stability in my life and that was all taken away from me. I just didn't know what to do."

But Colin considers himself "one of the lucky ones" as he was able to access housing support that allowed him to stay in a hostel. It was all that prevented him from having to sleep on the streets and he dreads to think what the outcome might have been without that support.

Colin was first introduced to Wintercomfort by a hostel support worker who recommended volunteering as a way to keep busy while he was getting back on his feet. To Colin, this was a crucial step towards his recovery.

"I've always had a strong work ethic; I've always worked to support my family – that's how I was brought up," he says proudly. "I needed to keep my brain working, and volunteering gave me a sense of direction. I think it's important for a lot of people who go through difficult times to feel useful and a part of something."

Soon after spending time helping in the Wintercomfort kitchen, Colin was offered a job with the at-the-time budding social enterprise Overstream Clean as a cleaning operative. He embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly, and quickly became

"I've always had stability in my life and that was all taken away from me. I just didn't know what to do"

an integral part of the enterprise.

"I don't mind giving my all to Overstream Clean, as it has helped me so much. It really doesn't feel like work. I'm just giving back in any way that I can," he says, highlighting the dual roles that social enterprise plays.

Not only does it give those in crisis that leg up into gainful employment and the opportunity to reintegrate into society, it also helps that enterprise to carry on being a lifeline for others in the future.

Colin is now living in his own flat, having navigated the council's social housing list, and is working full

time for Overstream Clean.

"Thanks to Wintercomfort and the support I've been given here, the future's looking bright," he says.

"It's just the last few pieces of the puzzle now. I've even begun studying with the Open University.

"But I know that if I do have a bad day, there will always be support for me here because I'm part of a team that cares for me.

"Knowing that keeps me on level ground to continue moving forward."

Written by Leon Blake

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Wintercomfort: the past year in numbers

836 visited a total of **21,427** times over the year – a **13.9%** increase on 2017-18

40+ partners worked with us to support service users



55 participated in Food for Food's kitchen skills training

26 completed training with Overstream Clean,
14 gained employment with Overstream Clean and Garden



30 regular volunteers supporting our services

65 participated in cookery classes



509 accessed our learning and training programmes – a **20%** increase on 2017-18

44 were supported into paid employment



89 gained voluntary roles

On average **66** people a day visited Wintercomfort for support



Our 2018-19 financial year in brief

Welfare service

Rough sleepers and the homeless have complex needs and face multiple disadvantages. Those we help often have poor physical and/or mental health and struggle with alcohol and/or drug dependencies. Many have criminal records, low educational attainment levels and poor numeracy and literacy.

They are isolated, often living on the margins of society, having lost contact with friends and family. Homelessness is rarely the result of simply having nowhere to sleep. For the people who use Wintercomfort, it tends to be the result of complex and often cumulative events, for example, job loss, eviction, addiction, leaving an institution, abuse or just an inability to cope.

We are open seven days a week and support – on average – 66 people per day.

We provide:

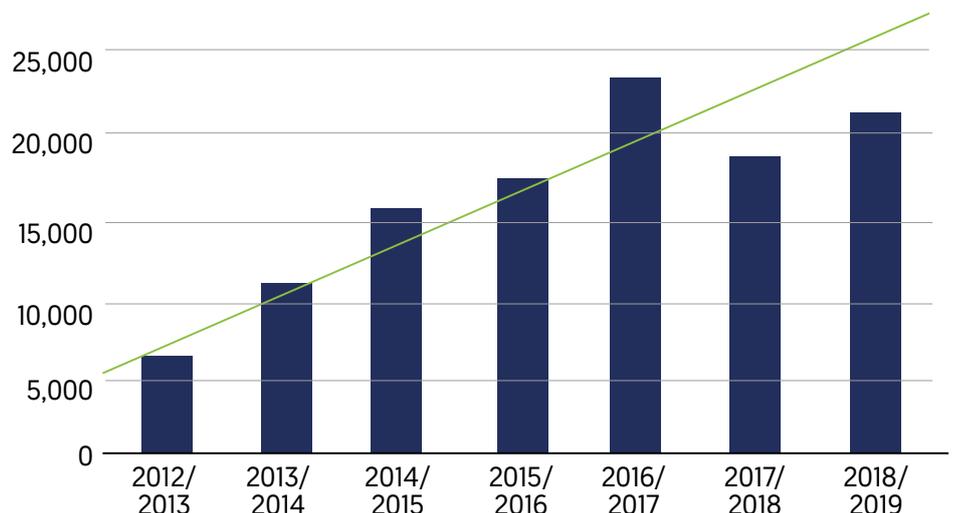
- A free cooked breakfast for rough sleepers: tea, coffee, toast and cereal are also free to all
- Showers, laundry and a clothes store facility are available daily
- Specialist help; external agencies come into the centre each morning to support individuals in accessing housing, benefit advice, debt advice, drug and alcohol treatment, and

primary and secondary health care, including counselling

- A variety of hygiene workshops are available, including foot care and hairdressing
- Basic lunch served daily



Number of visits



Our team holds one-to-one key-working sessions with service users to develop individual personal development plans that are regularly reviewed and updated. The welfare service provides a safe place with much-needed companionship and a sense of community, as well as encouraging individuals to access Wintercomfort's social enterprises, learning and development services.

Learning and development

Wintercomfort offers a wide range of services to support personal development, including: job skills workshops; CV writing; job searching; interviews skills; and general advice and guidance. These opportunities support individuals to raise their aspirations for the future and to take the next steps towards integration into mainstream society.

We offer basic skills workshops such as food hygiene, literacy, numeracy and English courses leading

to level one and two accredited functional skills qualifications, allowing vulnerable people to gain new skills and confidence. This work is essential and helps to transform lives.

Our learning, training and volunteering activities allow vulnerable people to gain new skills and confidence. We believe passionately that everyone should be given a chance to change their circumstances positively, develop themselves and contribute to the wider community.

Social enterprises

Wintercomfort has two social enterprises: Food for Food, a catering business, and Overstream Clean, a cleaning and gardening service. These activities provide much-needed work experience and accredited learning, and contribute financially to our core services.

Our social enterprises offer extended and progressive opportunities that help service users to bridge the gap between training, volunteering and employment.

Our key services – meeting needs and facilitating change

8,512 hot breakfasts served

44 individuals gained new jobs

Food4Food



55 Individuals took part in Food for Food training and work experience

16 individuals participated in our pop-up training café

6,902 buffet customers fed

Overstream Clean



14 gained employment after training or working for us

26 Individuals completing Overstream Clean training course

140 guided learning hours completed

5,950 hours of paid work completed

“Working with Wintercomfort has opened my eyes to how much support it gives to the vulnerable and homeless in Cambridge. There is so much the Wintercomfort team do, and they have a passion and energy for what they do. Their beneficiaries told me it was the best provider for miles. We will continue to build our relationship with Wintercomfort”

Jo Rees, Head of People Development at Cambscuisine

Wintercomfort's income and expenditure

