

# Night Shelter IMPACT Report

## 2013 / 14

**Report on the Housing Justice network  
of Church and Community Night Shelters**





# INTRODUCTION

*“Is this not the sort of fast that pleases me: ... sharing your food with the hungry and sheltering the homeless poor.” (Is 58:6-7)*

Church and Community Night Shelters are a practical response from churches to this call from God, relayed to us by Isaiah. We open our churches and church halls, offering hospitality to people in need and find that we are changed in the process.

“Almost everybody that I have come into contact with doing this work has had their attitudes to the homeless seriously changed.” (volunteer)

A big part of the reason I work for Housing Justice is rooted in my time as a night shelter volunteer in Cambridge 20 years ago. My experience there inspired me to make my career in the sector. Now, ten years since the first London shelter forum was convened under the auspices of UNLEASH, we find the need for this humanitarian response from churches (and other people of goodwill) is growing.

Over the years Church and Community Night Shelters have evolved and developed and yet some myths about them and the people who are our guests remain stubbornly present. So although no report based on data can tell the full story this impact report is in part an attempt to set the record straight; to share what we know about our guests and how their time in a night shelter fits into their journey from the streets to a new home.

Night shelters are not homes but they are an important step on the way for many of our guests. The communal environment of a shelter, the fact that in most cases the venue changes each night, and the presence of many volunteers, mean that a night shelter is not a suitable environment for every rough sleeper. However this is as it should be because night shelters have always been and will remain a complement to the statutory safety net rather than a replacement for it.

“It is warm and safe, teaches you tolerance. Very supportive and set a good example of helping other people. They try to treat everybody equally and with respect.” (guest)

Volunteers are a very important part of the work of CCNS and so we have also collected some information about them, not least to demonstrate the value of their contribution. We also look forward in the report to the impact of the Housing Justice Quality Mark as it is rolled out, encouraging more partnerships and better and more consistent guest experiences across the night shelter movement.

I hope you find this report interesting and useful – and if you are involved with a night shelter yourself, I urge you to make sure your data is collected and included in next year's report.

"I am finding it interesting that despite the difference of the churches here – being it a this or a that church – actually they're coming together as a Body, as it should be, in the Body of Christ and actually working together and establishing some sort of unity and strength in unity together to help the outside. I'm finding it really interesting that they are working together instead of going against each other." (guest)

*Aislinn Gelder*

Chief Executive



shelter scene: guests socialising





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to **London Housing Foundation** for funding our work on data collection and analysis, and to **Get the Data** who worked with us to design and implement the data gathering system which has been used.

Thanks are also due to Paul Reily who led Housing Justice's work with the Church and Community Night Shelters network between 2010 and 2014, and who wrote the first draft of this report.

And of course we acknowledge and celebrate the work of all the Night Shelters coordinators (whether paid or unpaid), volunteers, trustees and supporters, who work so tirelessly to respond to the needs of homeless and vulnerable people in society. You are an inspiration!





# Headlines from the 2013 /2014 Season

Almost £1.5 million worth of volunteer time leads to one third of guests being able to move on to various forms of accommodation; that's almost 500 people who were safely accommodated over the season!

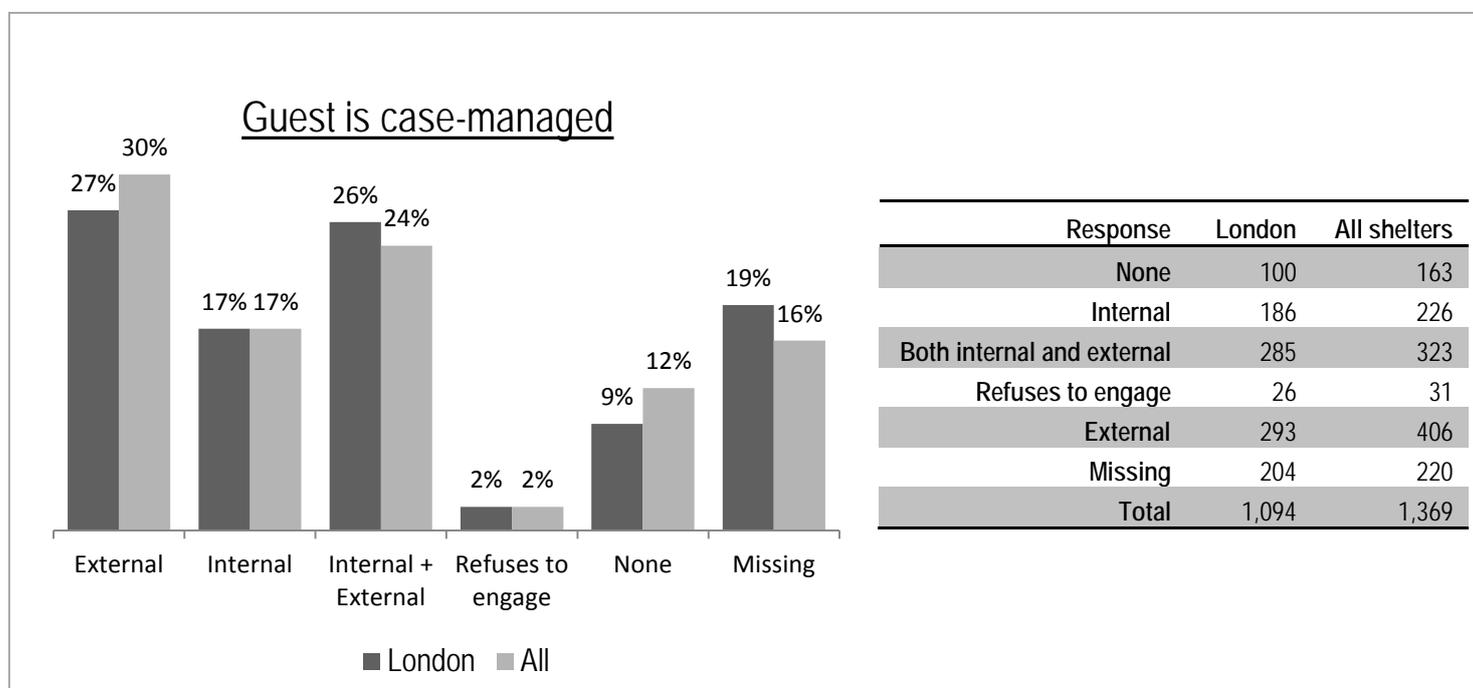
What was provided ...

112,300 volunteer hours, valued at almost £1.5 million of volunteer time, across 24 Night Shelters. 21 of them covered 23 London Boroughs providing Night Shelters which were open for an amazing total of 2,380 nights, offering 42,161 bed places. Just under 450 Churches, Church Halls, Synagogues and Mosques offered their premises for use as Night Shelters.

What was achieved ...

1,577 guests (1,303 in London) were offered overnight shelter for varying periods of time; of whom 491 received some sort of move on accommodation, which is a 34% 'move on rate'!

A total of 934 had some form of case management support (that's almost 60% of the total).

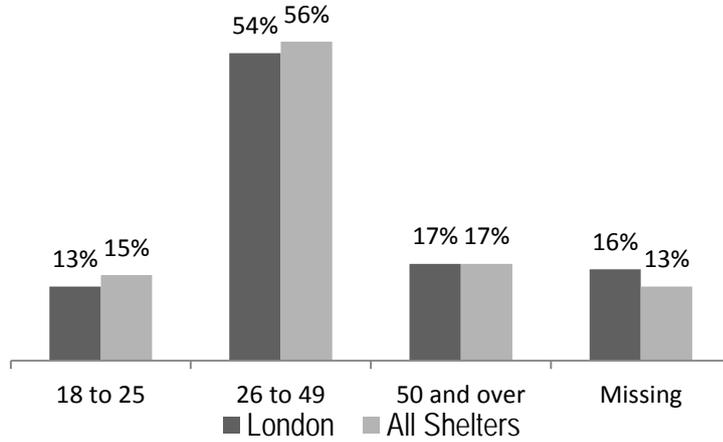


We were able to gather the best quality data on 1,094 of the guests in London Night Shelters. Just over 50% were between 26 and 49; over 50% were from the UK, and 27% were from the EEA. A total of 888 had been street homeless. 332 (approx. 1/3) were 'new to the street', and 317 (approx. 30%) had been on the street for more than 6 months.

... and all this was achieved against a background of rising homelessness, especially amongst people with increasingly limited access to housing and other welfare benefits.

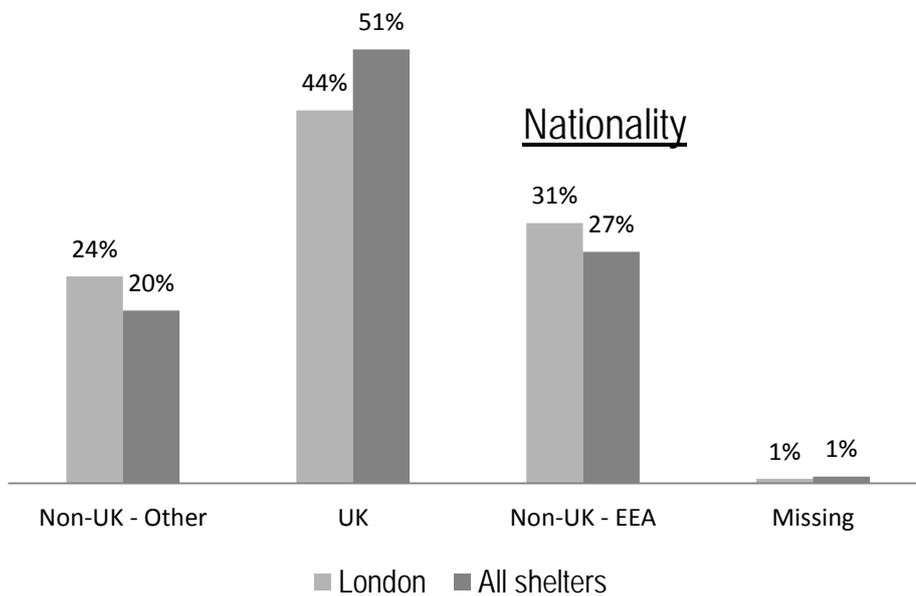
# What we know about our guests

## Age Group

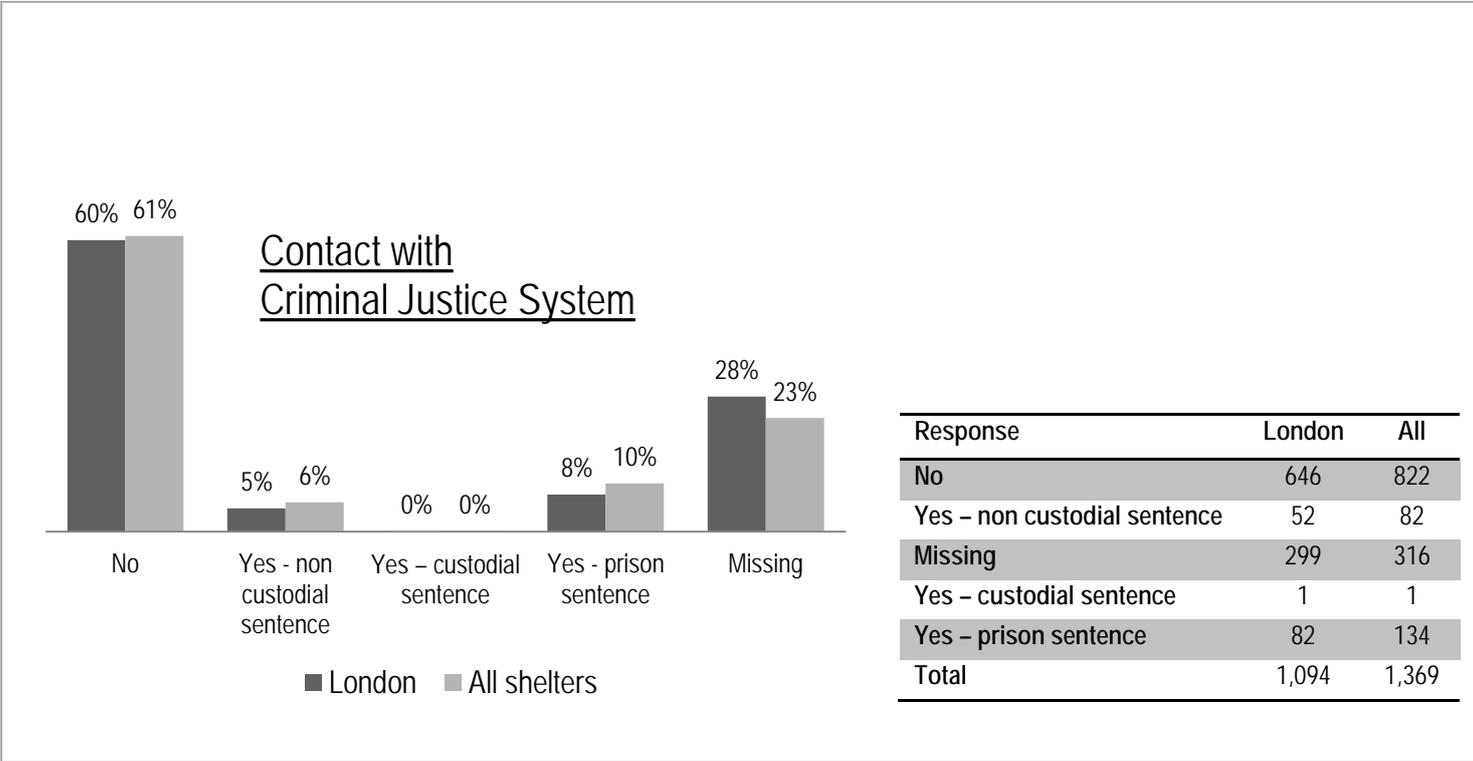
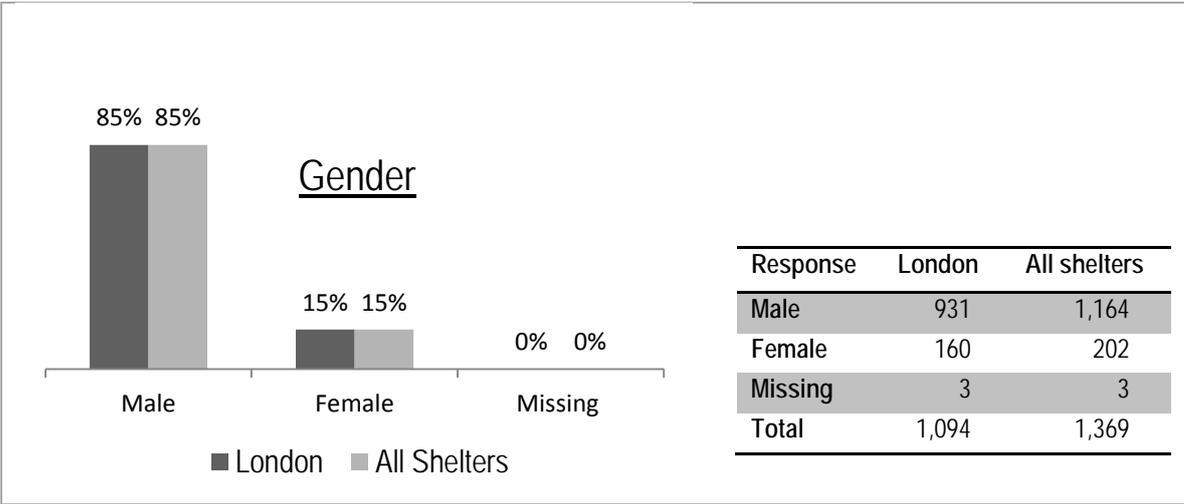


Response	London	All shelters
18 to 25	140	202
26 to 49	594	760
50 and over	189	228
Missing	171	179
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,369</b>

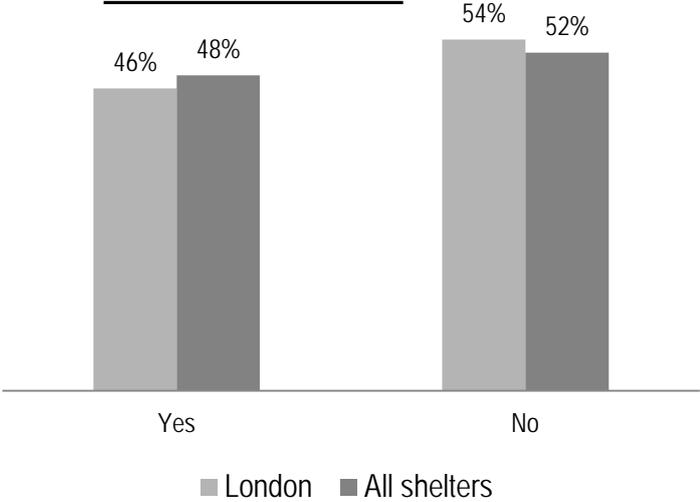
## Nationality



Response	London	All shelters
Non-UK - Other	268	280
UK	483	703
Non-UK - EEA	337	375
Missing	6	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,369</b>



Drug, alcohol or  
mental health need



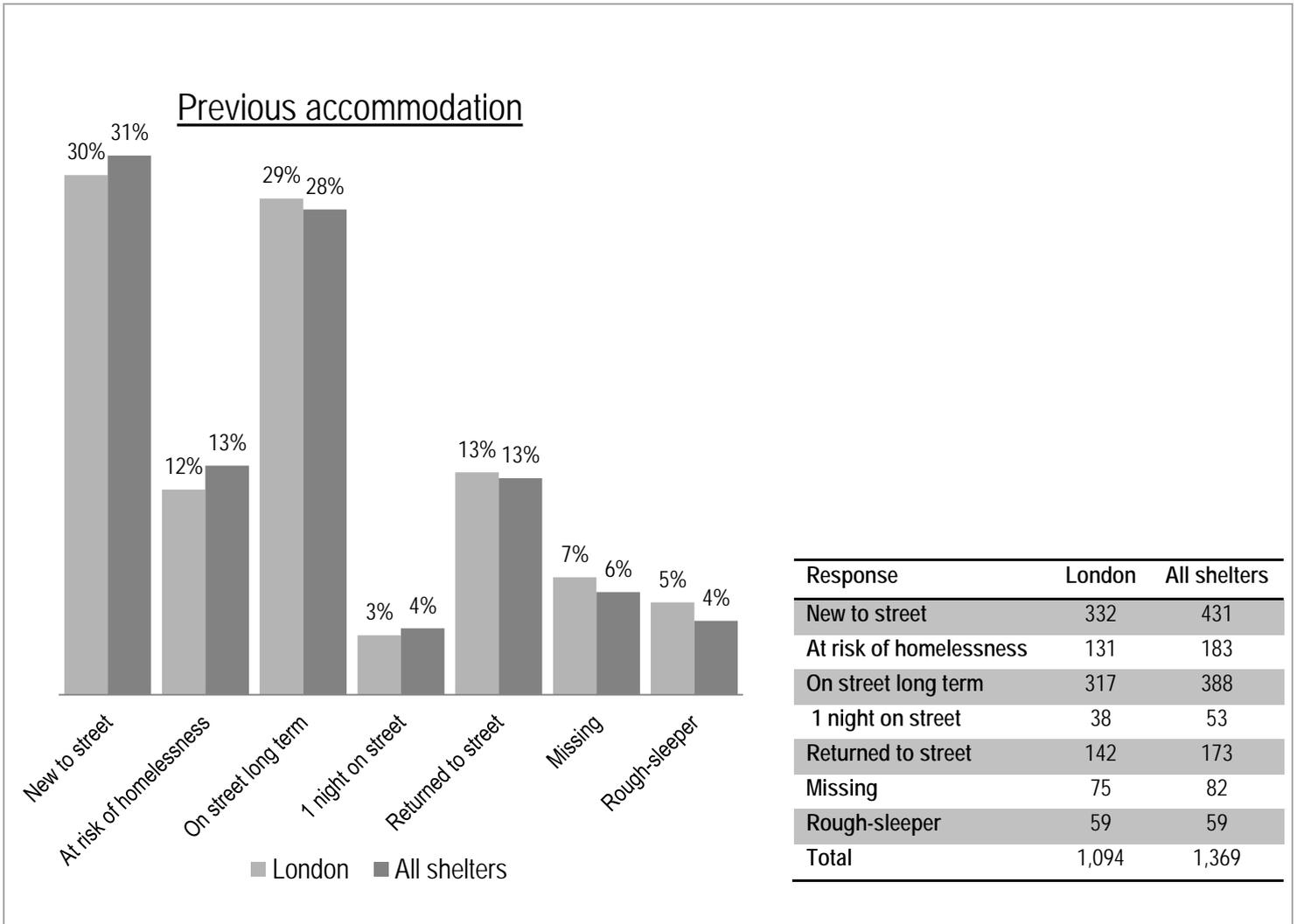
Response	London	All shelters
Yes	506	661
No	588	708
Total	1,094	1,369



# Debunking Myths...

## 1. Night Shelters take people who are not really homeless

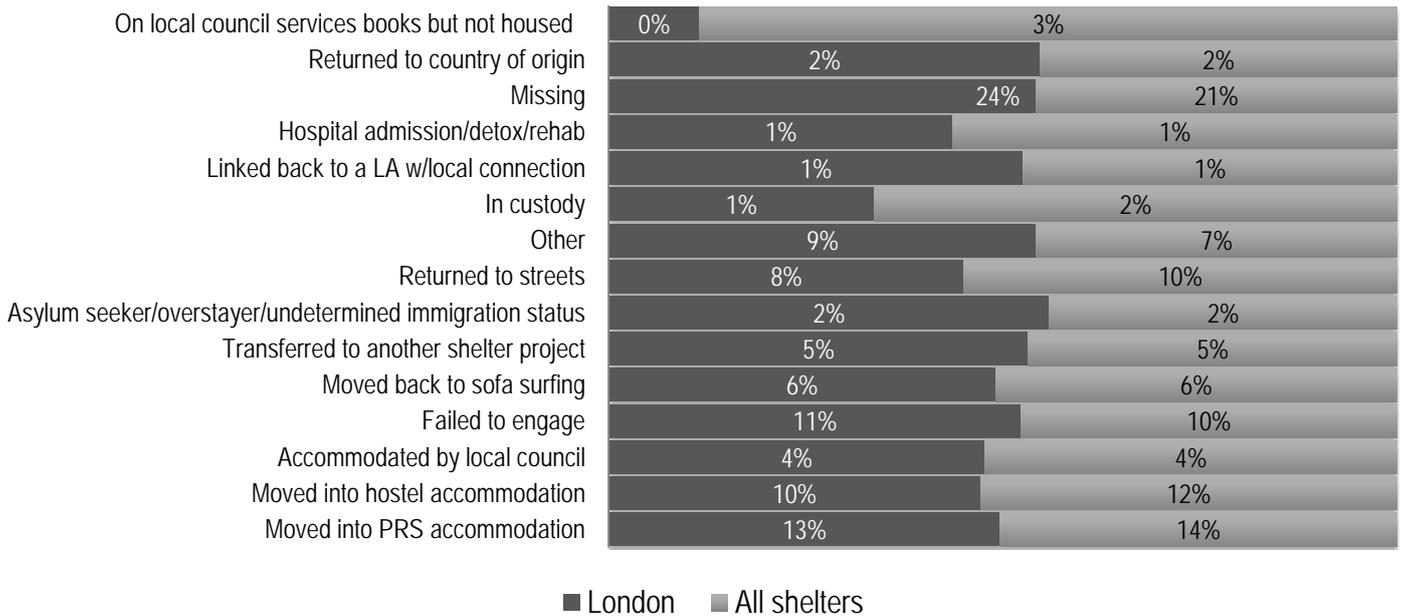
Anecdotally, the stories gathered from the Night Shelters indicate that a significant majority of guests are neither sofa surfers, nor vulnerably housed, but are actually street homeless. The data recording for this is difficult though; among the London Night Shelters one measure that we are working towards is to cross reference guests' details with the CHAIN Database. However street homelessness is only one part of the picture, as an increasing number of people are vulnerably and precariously housed e.g. "sofa surfing" and just one step away from street homelessness. Church and Community Night Shelters provide a valuable additional safety net, preventing people from having to sleep on the street.



## 2. Night Shelters sustain people in their lives on the street

The CCNS aim is 'to offer (Christian: often, but not exclusively) hospitality, which leads to personal transformation, which leads to movement off the street and into a home'. The figure of a 34% resettlement rate indicates that the work of Night Shelters in helping people off the street is extremely effective: representing almost 500 people whose lives have been transformed! Additionally, we know that not all efforts are successful, but a measure of the intent to help guests to a better situation is reflected by almost 1000 of them - that is 60% - receiving some case working capability. Added to this, there are many Night Shelters, among them the newer ones, who have little resources available to undertake case working, and so are unable, even though the intent is there.

### Moved on destination



Response	London	All shelters
Moved into PRS accommodation	137	176
Moved into hostel accommodation	107	152
Accommodated by local council	41	57
Failed to engage	116	134
Moved back to sofa surfing	60	79
Transferred to another shelter project	53	59
Asylum seeker/overstayer/undetermined immigration status	24	24
Returned to streets	86	133
Other	87	93
In custody	10	25
Linked back to a LA w/local connection	14	16
Hospital admission/detox/rehab	11	18
Missing	249	267
Returned to country of origin	21	22
On local council services books but not housed	4	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,337</b>

### **3. Conditions in Night Shelters are appalling**

While the facilities in CCNS's are usually fairly basic this is more than made up for in the quality of the hospitality and welcome. One guest in a Shelter video even likened his experience of staying in the Shelter to be like staying at the Hilton! Whilst the Hilton Hotel might have something to say about that, it indicates a measure of appreciation that comes from being well looked after. Part of the work of the best practice guide associated with the HJQM is to articulate these 'standards of welcome and hospitality' which cover issues such as the amount of space between beds, the number of toilets and hand basins, and the provision of reading material and other means of entertainment. Some of the venues within Shelter networks try to outdo each other in the quality of food that they provide! But most importantly, it isn't just the physical care and conditions that matter; rather it is what motivates that is so important, as this sets the culture of the Shelter. Time and again the guests refer to the most important thing to them being the way in which they are respected and spoken to as human beings, which is evidenced by the many positive guest comments highlighted throughout this report

### **4. Night Shelters at best work unilaterally, at worst undermine the work of other agencies**

As in other aspects of Shelter life, individual Night Shelters are at different places on any continuum between close collaborative working with Local Authorities and Statutory Agencies, and no joint working with such. There are very few, if any, Night Shelters which intentionally have nothing to do with other agencies. The vast majority work in close collaboration, in some cases with officers of the Local Authority involved in supporting the set up of the Shelter, and even volunteering to run it. Some agencies don't want to recognise the contribution that the church and faith sector is ready to make in addressing homelessness, of course, which is rather unfortunate, and in these cases Housing Justice seeks to draw both parties together. We are often represented on groups of Local Authorities with whom we continue to share the common concern for joint working.



# The Details

Within London there are a total of **24 Night Shelters** operating across **26 Boroughs** (there are 33 London Boroughs in total).

**The two further Boroughs of Enfield and Greenwich are exploring setting up CCNS in the 2014 / 15 Season;**

The remaining **5 Boroughs with no specific CCNS** are: Bexley, City of London, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Wandsworth.

This report is based on data from 21 Church and Community Night Shelters (CCNS) located in 23 London Boroughs. Three Night Shelters either failed to present any data or their data was not in a form that could be used: Barnet; Hillingdon (which is not voluntarily run, but commissioned by the Local Authority); and Redbridge and so have not been able to have their results included in this report.

The wider data across 24 Night Shelters comes as a result of the inclusion of the Night Shelters based in Southend, Wycombe and Swansea. We are grateful to them for providing us with this valuable information. The wider national Church and Community Night Shelter Network comprises approximately 63 Night Shelters at various stages of development; some have been running for many years (even decades) others are about to open their doors for the first time.

This does not include the approximately 126 Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (*SWEP*) Night Shelters which are operated largely by Local Authorities when the anticipated temperature falls below zero degrees centigrade for three nights. One of the aims for Housing Justice over the coming year is to include a greater number of these Night Shelters (both voluntary and *SWEP*) in the data reporting process.

## Working in partnership

Whilst the significant characteristic of the CCNS network is that it is within the voluntary church and faith community sector, some Government money has helpfully been made available through the Homelessness Transition Fund; this has in part supported the case working of guests, and the more advanced training of volunteers. **Each pound of government money invested this season has released £11.92 of volunteer time; and each guest moved into their own accommodation has come at a contribution of just £695.40 of government money.** This figure represents excellent value, comparing very favourably with the costs of commissioned accommodation and other support services. Not to mention of course the even greater personal human costs and impacts on health and well being that homelessness has on the individual and across society as a whole.

## The culture of CCNS

The Vision of the Housing Justice **Church and Community Night Shelters** Project is to resource, improve and link up the growing network of Night Shelters across England and Wales, encouraging and equipping them to offer hospitality with excellent standards to homeless guests, thereby supporting them in their journey from street to home.

This vision informs the culture and ethos of the Housing Justice network of CCNS, in particular through:

### **Hospitality and welcome:**

We have expressed the aim of the CCNS Network as being about the offer of hospitality. This is central to all that is done: the manner in which the mashed potato is served on the plate of the guest is as important as the fact we call the people who use the Night Shelters guests and not 'service users'. The realisation among volunteers that when they look in the mirror they are looking at a potential homeless person sustains an attitude of humility in the encounter with our guests. This attitude by itself is not enough – there are many who work in the Statutory Sector of which this could equally be said. However the 'significant other' that the CCNS Network has is time: our volunteers can take an hour over a cup of coffee with a guest in the way that the paid caseworker often cannot. This unique element that the Night Shelters 'bring to the party'

must not be lost. However, it does demonstrate the way in which there is the potential for a fruitful and complementary relationship between the Voluntary and Statutory sectors. It's not just a question of delivery of a service at a cheap price – where the fear of the Council Officer is that it may not be done 'professionally'. Rather, there is a real opportunity for joint working with each bringing their distinctive skills and attributes. This leads to the second aspect of the CCNS culture.

### **Partnership working:**

If there is to be real partnership there has to be trust. This has been seen to be developing over the past season especially as new Night Shelters have started where there is a very strong partnership between the Local Authority and the Night Shelter. We would like to believe that these good examples and the role that some of the Leads of the London Sub Regions are giving in this regard will be taken on board as the good practice that it represents, by others who are slower to respond. There is a real challenge here to some practitioners who have been around the block a number of times and who believe that they alone know the way, and that way has been in grand isolation! Fortunately this attitude seems to be in its demise, and that needs to continue as the Sector is in a place where the lone ranger approach will not survive.

## Role of Housing Justice in these achievements

Housing Justice, as the umbrella organisation of the CCNS Network, takes the role of enabler and encourager in all of this. We are also critical in the setting and maintaining of best practice and safe standards, which will be increasingly through the Housing Justice Quality Mark (HJQM) accreditation process. This is important so that the Night Shelter guests receive the best possible hospitality and welcome, the volunteers are able to serve in a safe and meaningful way, and the local community (partly through the agency of the Local Authorities) can be assured that the vulnerable in our society are being safely accommodated, and helped to the next stage of their journey. These things are achieved in a variety of ways:

- **CCNS Forums:** there are regular meetings of the network of Night Shelters based around London and the South East. These are opportunities for CCNS coordinators and others to engage with relevant subjects, and also to act in support of each other and learn from each other via the Network and the relationships that develop. The establishment of the Housing Justice Quality Mark (HJQM) as well as the developments of the data collection system have been key items. Other issues explored have included: insurance provision, collaborative working with others (e.g.: through partnership with CRISIS and their Christmas provision), and the place for and work of reconnection. Over the past year a new Forum has been established for the Welsh Night Shelters in Cardiff, which is a very exciting development.
- **Wider Networking:** this has happened in the past season through two national, and one local, initiative. September 2013 saw the first Annual Gathering for Night Shelter Coordinators held at Scargill House, where Coordinators were able to take time aside to reflect together, learn from each other and to participate in work on key themes such as the place of faith within the Night Shelter and the beginnings of the Housing Justice Quality Mark (HJQM). In October, we held the first National Night Shelter Conference, hosted by CCLA, with a wide breadth of stakeholders and interested parties ranging from potential Night Shelter start ups to senior Local Authority officers. And in November, in preparation for the start of the Season, St. Martin-in-the-Fields hosted our *Homelessness, Hospitality and Hope* event: a time for prayer and worship which included an act of commissioning.
- **Consultancy:** advice and support is given in a variety of ways. It maybe to help Primary Vision Carriers of the Night Shelter dream to work through what is right for their location; it might be to engage as the third party national expert in a conversation between the local voluntary group and a Local Authority or Police Commissioner; it might be to encourage Coordinators just setting out on a project, or to advise them in dealing with a particular problem; it might be to help to encourage people in joint working (whether that's between churches, or the voluntary groups and statutory ones); it might be to respond to concerned MP's of every political hue who want to see something change in their constituency. However, we are

especially active in helping new Night Shelters to start, or to take the next stages of their development forward, and this has been especially the case in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, as well as in the New Way Shelter in Newham, and the exciting development of the work of the 999 Club in Lewisham, to name but a few.

- **Training:** this has been delivered both through our 'Introduction to Homelessness' training, but also through more specialist training to CCNS staff and volunteers in partnership with Thames Reach. In preparation for the forthcoming Season an impressive Series of Reflective Learning Sets is being run across 4 venues for more experienced volunteers. Each venue is hosting the 6 sessions of the series which span subjects including mental health, reconnection, people trafficking, and the care of both the guest and the volunteer.

## The Housing Justice Quality Mark (HJQM)

The importance of best practice and safe standards has already been mentioned. The HJQM was piloted from January 2013 to the end of the season, and involved eight Night Shelters completing the pilot questionnaire and accreditation process, alongside a consultation with stakeholders in June. This formed the basis of the HJQM which was launched in June 2014, and which is set to be run out to 24 new and existing Night Shelters over the coming Season. The official Parliamentary launch event will take place at the start of the 2014 Shelter season in November or December 2014. The Night Shelters that receive the HJQM will benefit from support for and assurance of best practice, which will affect their capability to attract funding, their insurance premiums, their relationships with the Statutory Sector. Perhaps even more importantly on the human level the HJQM will give the assurance of an effective safe Shelter to the guests using it, the volunteers serving in it, and the local community alongside whom it runs.

### **What has been learnt and might lead to improvement going forward into the next Season:**

The significant advantage of the way in which the CCNS Network operates is the way in which we are able to combine two opposite practices. The **autonomy of the local** means that individual Night Shelters are able to tailor their work to their particular context, whilst through the work and support that Housing Justice offers they are able to receive the **benefit of the national**, whereby a united voice gathering together shared experience and expertise is better able to maintain a more coherent and higher standard of Shelter and draw attention to the need countrywide. This is a guiding principle, but in its further outworking lessons are being learnt:

### **Wider representation across the country:**

Whilst over 25% of Night Shelters are easily gathered into a Forum network because of their relative proximity to each other in London and the South East, the task of joint working for many across the country where the nearest Shelter may be half a day's drive away is a challenge. We are part way through establishing regional representation that covers the entire country, whilst taking note of the respective needs, history and character of the different areas. In the North, and particularly the North East, Juli Thompson of Bradford Inn Churches is working to develop new Night Shelters and supporting existing ones. Across the Midlands, Housing Justice's Emma Neill, whilst supporting the wider work of the Christian Homelessness Forum in Birmingham, is also able to give support to new Night Shelters. The Southwest has a small number of established Night Shelters, but also in a number of Churches are investigating the possibilities of how they might be involved in rough sleeping provision next season. Rachel Makin, working on behalf of Housing Justice, is advising both the Churches and Local Authorities alike, especially where there is confusion about the work and nature of Night Shelters: many of the Frequently Asked Questions and fears that are articulated are easily answered by reference to Night Shelters that have been running effectively for a number of years.

**More extensive data collection and more complete data received:** Reference has already been made to the need to extend the data collection that we are doing. The Housing Justice Data Collecting spreadsheet gives all that is required to both record relevant information about guests, and at the same time to offer that data to the wider network, enabling a much fuller picture to be given, and an important bench marking process to be undertaken. Developing further the use of this tool is an important goal for the forthcoming season.

## Golden questions data

Measure	London (21)	All shelters (24)
Total volunteer hours	83,394	112,293
Nights open	1,953	2,380
Number of bed nights	36,961	42,161
Number of beds filled	31,062	35,718
Total number of guests	1,303	1,577
Number of guests who were case managed	743	934
Number of guests not given a bed	234	345
Stayed for more than 28 days	269	281
Moved on (housed etc.)	256	491
Occupancy rate	84%	84%
Volunteer hours per night	59	59
Value Volunteer Hours worked	£ 1,106,253	£ 1,489,607
Volunteer value per gov. £ spent (P3 only)	£ 11.92	-
Cost to rehouse / move on (P3 only)	£ 695.40	-
Percentage moved on	34%	34%



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