

Night Shelter at St. Peter de Beauvoir in Dalston

We offer hospitality to fifteen homeless people as part of the Islington winter night shelter scheme. We provide a meal, a bed and conversation for one night of the week and people move to six other churches on the other nights of the week.

Doors open at 7.30pm and if everybody shows up, everyone enjoys hospitality of the church, a meal etc. If they want to sit quietly, they can sit quietly. If they want to join in and talk, it is entirely up to them. 8.30pm is the deadline to allocate beds.

These people are here because they care about our plight, about the homeless. I am on the street through my own doing: through the drink and depression. Some people go on the streets and it is totally not their fault.

Some of them may be waiting for accommodation, some of them just come from abroad; they don't settle down yet and they are looking for somewhere to live.

The hardest part about being on the street is not keeping yourself warm, believe it or not. People don't realise, I don't want to be crude, but it is finding a toilet. A lot of people don't realise that because they are in their comfortable homes and they just don't understand. Once you go through it then the reality hits you smack in the face.

To me the project is as important for the volunteers, most of whom come from the wider community, as it is for the clients for whom we serve.

We figure we have probably got somewhere in the region of 400 volunteers across the centres which when I discovered that it nearly blew me away, I thought it was so tremendous.

When we see people who are homeless and on the streets we do not know whether to give them money because we don't know what it will be used for; we do not know how to help. So this is great because it makes you feel you can do a little something there that might help other people.

They are good people to give up their time, they could be doing other things, but they choose to come here and help the homeless like myself and Leonard.

I think that it is good fun to be here as a volunteer. It sounds like we are a bunch of do-gooders and we are terribly worthy. It is not like that at all; it is good fun and we are very glad to be involved.