

Serving The Homeless

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2018

Serving the Homeless is an inter-denominational group whose aim is to support homeless people in the Southend area, with particular reference to young, single, homeless people.

STH is primarily a fund raising group, but it also tries to highlight the problem of Homelessness within the local community that it serves. There have been 7 parishes involved in, 'Serving the Homeless,' and each of these can have members of their parish to serve on the Committee. Our constitution also allows for any other interested party to join the committee, if they share our aims. At present however only five of the parishes have members on the Committee and these represent the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist Churches that make up the membership. St Michael's Anglican Church no longer takes part in the activities of the committee and have declined to have a trustee or representative on the Committee. I regret therefore that we will need to remove St Michael's from our membership.

From its inception in 1991 STH supported the work of what was then 'The Homeless Day Centre', based at Valkyrie Road. We gave financial support to the Day centre and the separate Night Shelter based in York Road, through their transition into a combined Day and Night Shelter run by HARP. This included a £70,000 donation to allow the purchase of the freehold of the Valkyrie Road site. HARP's new combined Day and Night Shelter, the 'Bradbury Centre' in York Road, became fully operational in 2015. 'Serving the Homeless,' having made significant financial contributions to the development of this Centre, and transferred ownership of 13 properties that we had jointly owned with Acorn Housing into HARP's portfolio.

We now support HARP in a variety of ways. We publish regular "Wish Lists" in our parish newsletters to collect specific items required by the Homeless Day Centre, e.g. men's clothing and toiletries, sleeping bags etc. We also have weekly collections of dried food items such as coffee, tea, rice, pasta, tinned foods etc. which are delivered to the Bradbury Centre to be distributed and used by HARP. These are used in meals or to make food parcels for clients and to provide 'Night Packs' (drink cartons, snacks, etc.) for those in the Night Shelter and other properties

Throughout 2018 we also continued to provide £200 worth of fresh meat, milk and cheese each month, to the Bradbury Centre to cook nourishing lunches at the Day centre and at the other properties they run. This is purchased from STH funds and delivered each week by Linda. This has been greatly appreciated by HARP and helped them to provide **60,000** meals in 2017. For the last few years, in December, we have also provided turkeys to create Christmas lunches at HARP properties.

We also give HARP, an annual £3,500 per year for funding for clients in need. In the last two years the donation has been used extensively by the 'Transitions' project at Vera House, for clients with complex needs, and on counselling services at the Bradbury. In 2017-18 **1,096** people were assisted by HARP. 641 were 'of no fixed abode;' 113 were rough sleepers, and 342 had, 'tenancies at risk.' 58% of those presenting at HARP had some form of mental illness. **240** were aged 16-25, **259** were women.

HARP's sale of the Valkyrie Road site in 2015, released funds to build more supported accommodation. 'White Heather House' opened in March 2017 in the grounds of the Bradbury centre and is comprised of a group of three buildings providing accommodation for 20 homeless women. 'Serving the Homeless' supported this project by financing the bedding costs of £2000 and also providing garden benches for the

new gardens in front of the buildings. In April 2018 committee members were delighted to attend its official opening.

We also finance projects, events or individuals recommended to us by HARP, which allow their clients to gain work experience or life skills. This has taken many forms over the years, from groups working on conservation projects in Scotland to flights to attend sports selection competitions. In 2017 and 2018 we sponsored arts projects. The committee believes that this type of financial support to HARP allows young people to develop new skills, as well as independence and more positive self-image, all essential if clients, particularly young people, are to be helped into work and independent living. We share HARP's aim to help to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness that so many youngsters and adults find that they are caught up in.

We also respond to any requests to provide 'white goods' and in 2018 gave £1,500 towards the cost of a new industrial dishwasher.

In 2018 HARP had 174 units of accommodation. The committee should feel proud that they have played an important role in HARP's provision of accommodation for the homeless in Southend..

In 2013 the STH Committee began to work more actively with Southend YMCA projects, dealing with youngsters from 16-25. During 2015 a YMCA building programme that we were supporting came to fruition with 8 more units of accommodation provided in 2 properties. In 2016 we funded the furnishing of 3 more rooms at the YMCA building, 'The Tom Moulton Suite.' We also provided a further £2000 towards the cost of upgrading the music studio at the YMCA. In 2017 we were able to present the YMCA with a cheque for £4000 towards their 'Mary's House' project which will provide a home for younger children. We also sponsored a YMCA youth award and created 33 Christmas parcels for the young people staying at Southend YMCA over the Christmas period. These contained various 'goodies' e.g. chocolates, biscuits, hats, scarves, socks, mugs, nail varnish etc. All of this work continued in 2018, with a further £4000 given to the Mary's House project and £1000 for new bedding. 40 Christmas parcels were delivered to the young people at the Y. We again sponsored a Youth Award and committee members attended the Awards Night at Westcliff High School. The Committee has decided that, as a new venture, we will offer support through the Y to young people leaving their care and setting up their own homes in 2019.

Since 2014 STH, have been giving financial support to the 'Southend Churches Winter Shelters' programme. In 2016 Leigh Road Baptist Church joined the churches providing overnight shelter and STH agreed to purchase the equipment that they needed. 25 complete sets of bedding were bought and delivered to the Leigh Road Baptist Church Night Shelter. In 2017 we gave LRBC a further £500 towards the cost of installing a shower for their rough sleepers. We also gave £500 of general support to the programme and £150 to the Avenue Road Shelter which was running short of food. In 2018 we continued this association by helping Sacred Heart RC church set up a Night Shelter with a £1000 donation to purchase the bedding that they required. We also purchased £150 worth of men's and women's underwear to be distributed at the shelter.

In 2018 we also gave £500 to a new initiative in Southend called, 'Off the Streets,' which is providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers.

During 2018 we also continued funding a 'suspended meals' scheme at the Oasis café in Leigh. This money has been used to provide cooked breakfasts or lunches to a number of homeless individuals in the Leigh area, free of charge.

The Committee aim is to continue to raise funds to support the Winter Shelters, HARP, Southend YMCA, and any other local Homelessness initiative that the committee believe will be beneficial. Any scheme which would help to provide accommodation, training, experience or social skills for vulnerable young people will be considered, and the committee regularly welcomes representatives from HARP and Southend YMCA to talk to our committee about their plans. HARP is aware that they can call on STH for one-off emergency purchases or meaningful activity projects that meet our criteria. Southend YMCA is also aware that they can approach us, and they keep us up to date on their projects..

In order to finance our projects we hold an annual collection at the participating churches on 'Homelessness Sunday.' We also run a 200 Club, which had 104 members, and contributed £3,080 to our funds in 2018. We also aim to organise a fundraising activity approximately every 2 months.

Committee members also provide regular updates in their parish magazines and give talks to local schools, parish and community groups which often give rise to donations.

During 2018 STH raised £17,377.76 and paid out £16,077.48.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our committee members for their continued hard work and support throughout 2018. As always, particular thanks go to Frank in his role of 200 club co-ordinator, Linda as Secretary and also responsible for the weekly shopping and delivery of goods to the Day Centre, an immense task, and Alastair and Nina Bridgeman for their work as Treasurer and having our books prepared for their 2018 audit. We continue to pray for God's blessing on this work.

Jo Ronan, Chairwoman, Serving the Homeless, 2/3/2019

The year's activities have included:

Jan	Homelessness Sunday Collections taken in participating Churches
Jan 28 th	Sunday Lunch at Affinity
March 12 th	AGM at St Margaret's
March 22 nd	Meal at 'East'
April 28 th	Quiz Night at St. Margaret's
June 14 th	'Afternoon Tea' Park View Suite
July 5 th	Meal at 'Regatta'
July & Aug	STH Raffle
Sep 13 th	Indian Meal at the Yak and Yeti
Nov 16 th	Wine tasting at St Margaret's
Dec	Christmas cards and newsletters sent to all "Friends of STH"
Dec 14 th	Service of Carols and Readings for Christmas ,with mulled wine at Our Lady of Lourdes.