



Glasgow

Overnight Welcome Centre 2020/21



Approaching 200 years of
Christian care in Glasgow

Contents

Having a 24-hour service, with staff available during the day at OWC meant that guests had ongoing support. The service welcomed people and provided them with safety and food at the most critical points in their lives.

—Esther Muchena
Scottish Refugee Council

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Executive summary

The winter of 2020/21 marked a new way forward for the Glasgow Winter Night Shelter now re-modelled as the Overnight Welcome Centre (OWC).

Operating from a city centre hotel, we welcomed guests to the Overnight Welcome Centre from 1 December until 31 March, a total of 121 nights. Glasgow City Mission provided the operational side of the service, working in partnership with the Scottish Government and Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership who covered the hotel costs.

The pandemic necessitated changes across the homelessness sector, and meant we had to rethink how to offer emergency accommodation to those at risk of rough sleeping. These have been positive changes. The hotel venue allowed us to offer a safe place for guests 24 hours a day with guests provided with an en-suite room. This also afforded the option of easy self-isolation should a guest test positive for Covid-19. This only occurred once and the infection was contained with no further virus transmission.

Having ensured that each guest was warmly welcomed and felt safe in the service, our team's primary focus was identifying specific support needs and working towards a positive accommodation outcome for guests. Partnerships, both existing and new ones, were essential in achieving positive outcomes for 87% of guests; 6% up on last year's results. Helping guests to move from temporary accommodation into a more permanent solution was aided by the addition of the new staff role of Housing Support Officer.

The 24-hour service enabled concentrated work with guests to bring about effective solutions. Welfare checks throughout the day ensured guests' safety and well-being, and the introduction of meals in a socially distanced dining room helped to tackle loneliness and isolation.



Executive summary *cont.*

Significant advances have been made throughout the past year for people experiencing homelessness in Glasgow, which are reflected in our statistics.

Accommodation has been sourced for those who are eligible but further work is required for those who are EU nationals or from outwith the EU. There still remains a threat of destitution for a small number of these individuals, which could lead to them rough sleeping in Glasgow.

This past year has also shown that future planning of services is exceedingly challenging. It is hard to predict what will be required next winter. However, there is strong agreement across the sector that a return to mattresses on the floor would be highly undesirable. It is clear that Glasgow can do much better for those who are without a roof over their heads. However, unless accommodation can be offered on the same day to all who are in danger of sleeping rough, there will remain a need for a winter accommodation service to act as a safety net.



- **203** unique guests stayed for **1,589** bed nights



- a further **136** guests were helped in the hotel foyer to return to existing accommodation or received an immediate offer of accommodation



- an average occupancy of **13** guests per night; down from 29 guests in 2019/20



- an average of **7.8** bed nights per guest
- the capacity of **25** beds was never reached



- **76%** guests were male, **23%** were female; with an average age of **34.7**



- **47%** of guests were Scottish/British, **17%** were European nationals, **36%** were International (non-EU); all decreases on the previous season



- **87%** of guests were recorded as moving on to positive outcomes.



Staff and volunteers created a friendly, welcoming environment for each guest.



Introduction

Ibis was extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to support Glasgow City Mission to deliver the 2020-21 Overnight Welcome Centre and give a helping hand to those in need.

—Janice Fisher
Ibis Hotel

On 19 March 2020, with the country on the brink of lockdown, the Glasgow Winter Night Shelter was forced to close.

For ten years, we provided emergency shelter for thousands of vulnerable individuals, offering up to 40 guests per night a mattress on the floor. It was clear that a dormitory-style service was unsuitable for a Covid world and radical changes were necessary. Fast-forward to autumn 2020 and a partnership agreement with Glasgow City Council Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and the Scottish Government resulted in a new, hotel-based service opening on 1 December 2020.

A new service

The Glasgow Overnight Welcome Centre (OWC) operated as a 24-hour service hosted in an Ibis Hotel with 25 private bedrooms. There was a warm welcome for all and we continued our person-centred approach. This enabled us to identify the specific support needs of each guest in order to help rapidly re-accommodate them.

Providing each guest with their own single room gave dignity and privacy. Each room had a bed, television, en-suite and Wi-Fi. We removed kettles from bedrooms to encourage guests to venture downstairs for tea and coffee. This simple action offered them a safe space out with their room and enabled us to interact naturally and safely, discuss their case with them, and be vigilant for their welfare.



The Ibis Hotel became the venue for the OWC.



Providing each guest with their own single room gave dignity and privacy.



Our guests

|| To all of the workers who have become my friends. Thank you for all your help and support, love, care and kindness, and your advice and guidance.

—Guest

During the four-month winter season we welcomed 203 guests to the hotel. *Figure 1: Number of unique guests* shows the 2020/21 figure being about one third of previous years (red bars). This large decrease is to be welcomed and a clear indication of the great work already done by the HSCP during the pandemic to see anyone in need moved into temporary accommodation.

Although 203 guests stayed at the OWC, the staff supported a further 136 individuals who presented at the hotel. This included guests who already had some form of accommodation and needed help to return (green bar in Figure 1); and others who were supported to make a homeless application over the phone with the Out-of-Hours HSCP team and were offered accommodation on the spot (blue bar in Figure 1). These guests typically needed assistance with someone to walk them through the system.

Having built up an excellent working relationship with the Out-of-Hours team over the past three years, this process worked extremely well. We worked together to source creative solutions to best support people in moments of serious vulnerability.

The average nightly occupancy throughout the season was 13 guests, which is a 55% decrease on 2019/20. Our busiest night saw 20 guests in residence and unexpectedly, but thankfully, we did not reach our capacity of 25 rooms. This is mostly due to the positive effect of more temporary accommodation having been made available across the city. By contrast, last season saw 15 nights reaching the capacity of 40.

Figure 1: Number of unique guests



Our guests *cont.*

I inform you that I am in Romania, I returned to my work, I am in good condition and very happy. Thanks so much for your respect and help.

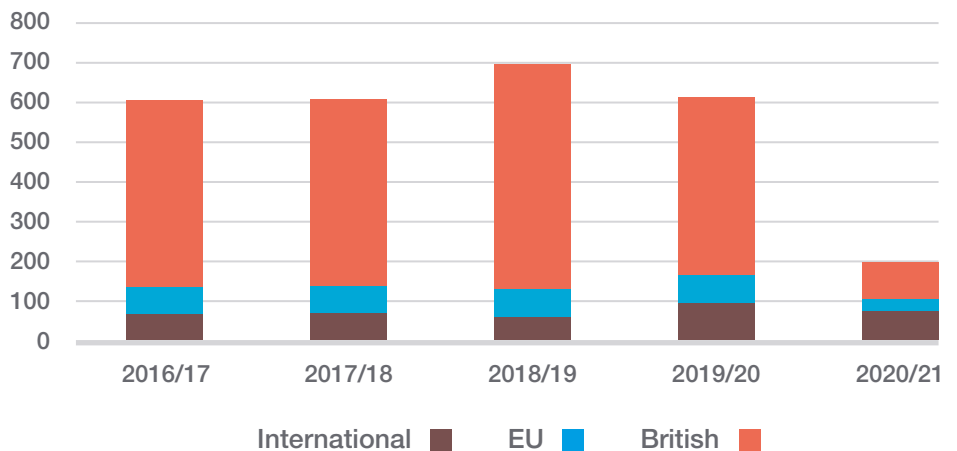
—Guest

With the increased use of temporary accommodation across the city, the number of British guests dropped considerably.

Figure 2: Numbers of guests by category shows an 80% drop from 443 (in 2019/20) to 96 this season. The number of EU and International guests were also lower than in some of the previous years, although numbers are more comparable. EU guests were down 50% on last year and International (i.e. non-EU) down 20%. Covid-19 may have influenced these figures due to travel limitations but a bigger factor was undoubtedly the great effort made to accommodate everyone during the first lockdown.

A number of guests in these categories, whom we knew from previous years, did not present at the OWC, having already taken up alternative accommodation. Overall, Internationals and EU guests made up 52% of the total—a far higher proportion than in previous years.

Figure 2: Number of guests by category



Our guests *cont.*

Having a calm and stress-free atmosphere in the hotel was an important aim for our team who desired to see guests feel secure and confident to accept the help on offer.

Figure 3: Gender of guests shows that the vast majority of our guests were male. The figure of 76% male is noticeably lower than the average in previous years of 85%. This is partly because our international guests account for a higher proportion of total guests. There tends to be a higher percentage of females amongst that group, when compared to Scottish guests who are predominantly male.

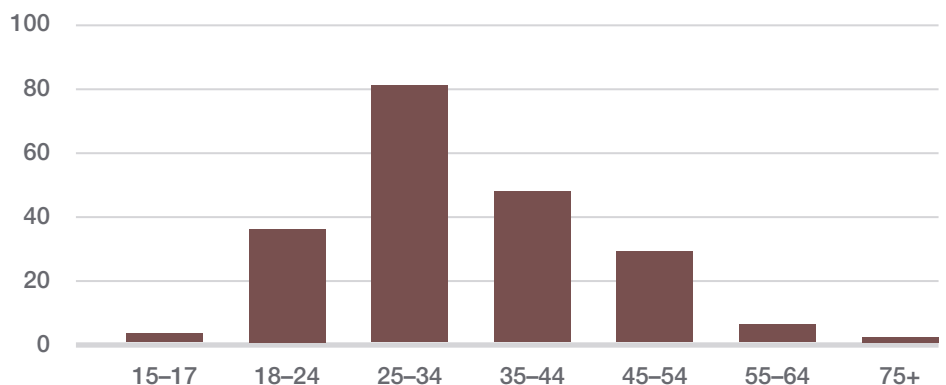
We became recognised by both Police Scotland and the HSCP as being the safest place during winter to bring someone who was in crisis and for whom other temporary accommodation would be unsuitable. We saw an increase in females staying with us who were fleeing domestic violence. Many of these cases took longer to work through, as it took time to build trust gently with guests who were troubled and traumatised.

The average age of our guests was 34.7 years, with most falling into the 25–34 years age bracket, see *Figure 4: Age group of guests*. This is lower than in previous seasons and, again, most likely due to a higher proportion of international guests. Typically, those seeking asylum are younger and these individuals made up a larger proportion of the total guests.

Figure 3: Gender of guests



Figure 4: Age group of guests



Personnel

|| Being part of the OWC was a wonderful experience. Despite the desperate situations many of the guests were facing, we laughed a lot together.

— Agnes Wildner, volunteer

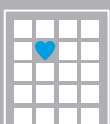
Moving to a 24-hour service required a change in the staff team. We had a rota of 13 employees filling morning, afternoon and overnight shifts. Four bank staff and an incredible team of 50 volunteers supported them. Our volunteers came with many additional skills and a passion for welcoming people into a place of safety. Volunteers typically gave a three-hour slot once a week and were treated as staff workers.

Half of our staff team were returning employees who brought significant experience with them. Lived-experience was still vitally important to our recruitment, and we were able to employ individuals who came with experience of homelessness, addiction and the asylum system. This knowledge was of tremendous value to both the team and our guests—who were often encouraged to talk with someone who could relate to their current experiences.

This year, we introduced two Housing Settlement Officers (HSOs) to the team whose role was to act as link workers for guests once they had moved on from the hotel. Their aim was to support guests to move from temporary accommodation into something more stable, hopefully a secure tenancy. This would have a knock-on effect of reducing the risk of guests returning to the OWC, either during the same season, or in subsequent years. The HSOs were given a 12-month contract and so are still working with guests, even though the OWC has closed.



Guests were offered a range of support over a cup of coffee.



Partnerships

Partnering with Glasgow City Mission OWC has been a very positive experience for us. Working together has allowed us to identify citizens eligible to apply to the EUSS, who otherwise would have been very difficult to reach.

—Noelia Martinez
Citizens Rights Project

The whole success of a project like the Overnight Welcome Centre is crucially linked to the strength of partnerships with other agencies.

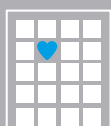
Since 2010, Glasgow City Mission has built links with other agencies to help provide support to guests of the night shelter. In recent years, the presence of embedded HSCP caseworkers has been invaluable. This winter we were delighted to host two HSCP Complex Needs Caseworkers in the hotel, five days a week. They offered support for any eligible guest and helped find suitable move-on accommodation.

With half of our guests being Internationals or EU citizens, we developed fresh partnerships with specialist organisations including the Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross and Citizens Rights Project. Many of our EU and International guests had complex cases which did not fit into the regular 'categories' that statutory agencies often work with. Thus, operating a 24-hour project allowed time to work through the details of an individual's case in order for them to trust us to provide appropriate support and to link them with other specialist providers.

Covid-19 meant that some of the partners were unable to attend in person but were always available via phone or Zoom. This year we had 20 agencies who committed to supporting our guests; giving us confidence that we could access expert knowledge across Glasgow. Each of our partners had access to our database, allowing them to upload progress or see updates on support for each individual.

We continued to rely upon street teams, especially those with Simon Community Scotland. They frequently accompanied guests to or from the hotel and facilitated key meetings, and they provided specialist casework at the multi-agency hub.

We would like to give enormous thanks to all our partners; a full list is given in the appendix.



Duration of stay

I am here to show my gratitude and happiness to thank every member of Glasgow City Mission @IBS Hotel. I was privileged to be helped by when I had nowhere to sleep. I was welcomed and treated extremely well by city mission and all the staff.

—Guest

The average number of nights a guest stayed was 7.8 nights—which is higher than in any previous year. However, *Figure 5: Average length of stay (nights)* shows that this value varied amongst the different nationality groupings.

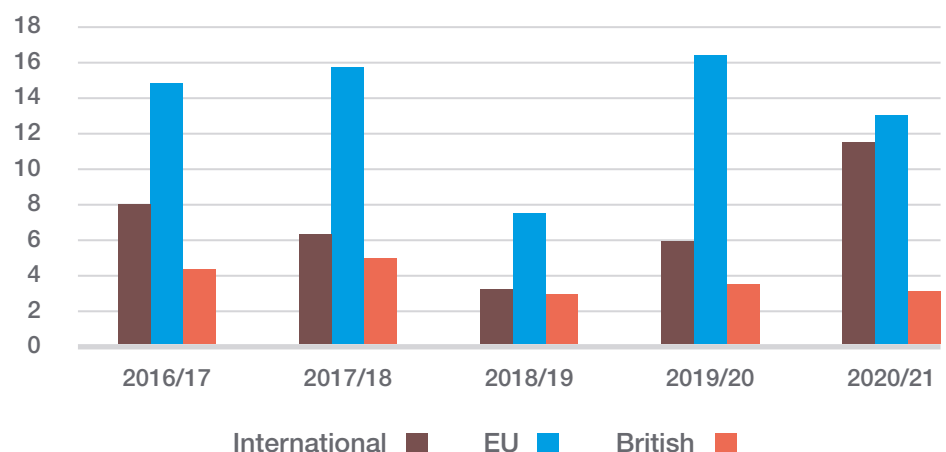
British guests were being moved on reasonably swiftly, with an average stay of 3.2 nights, which is comparable with previous years. Whereas International and EU guests were staying roughly four times as long at 11 nights and 13 nights respectively.

The length of stay could have been reduced further but not without a detrimental effect to the guests' outcomes. There were a number of individuals (both British and International) who could have been moved to another temporary hotel bed more rapidly. However, better outcomes were achieved for these individuals by taking more time and working creatively with partners.

For example, one Scottish man came to the hotel with his dog having previously not engaged with services due to the fear of being separated from his dog. Both stayed at the hotel where it was agreed that a better outcome for them would be to move straight into a tenancy rather than emergency accommodation. They stayed with us for 34 nights whilst work was completed on the flat.

We also hosted guests who required specific supported accommodation, so the OWC provided a safe and secure place to stay until that space became available. In this manner, the OWC was functioning effectively as a rapid re-housing centre; prioritising the needs of the individual, rather than merely a speedy turnaround.

Figure 5: Average length of stay (nights)



Meals

|| Thank you,
thank you,
thank you.

—Guest

Glasgow Winter Night Shelter only ever provided tea and toast to guests after the door opened at 10pm. Having guests on-site 24-hours meant that more food needed to be supplied. Breakfast was served at our city centre project on Crimea Street; lunch was brought to the hotel by the Lodging House Mission and our chef at the city centre project cooked dinner. We also had weekend lunches and dinners provided by the Homeless Project Scotland.

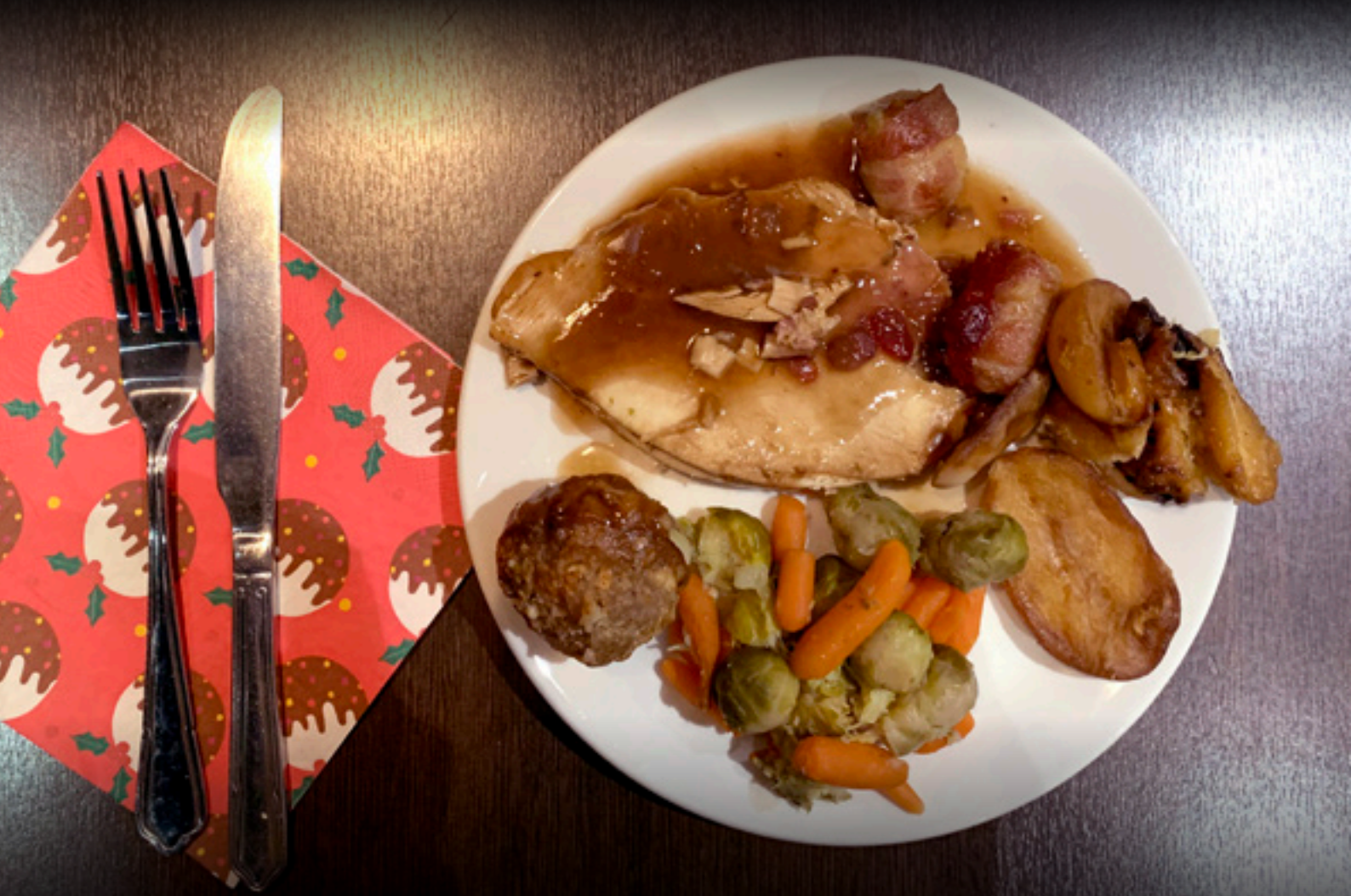
Meals became an important part of our service as they offered a place of interaction and community in amongst the social isolation of lockdown. The modest hotel dining room allowed for 12 single tables to be set up with table service provided each evening by a pair of church volunteers (supplied by a different Glasgow church each week). Over the weeks, the dining room became a place where guests came for conversation and to be near other people—which was often of great solace and aided their wellbeing.

Once again, we welcomed Healing for the Heart to provide Therapeutic Listening for guests. They came in during the dinner service two evenings a week and stayed to talk to guests who wanted to share. Caring for guests' mental health was valuable, especially as many had experienced trauma.



Positive conversations with staff and volunteers took place over meals.





The OWC served a wide variety of fresh nutritious food and hot meals.



Covid-19

|| The OWC was a real lifeline for our clients who were facing street homelessness during the winter months in the pandemic.

—Fiona Rennie
Govan Community Project

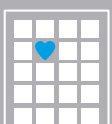
The pandemic changed patterns of working, as it did for all front-line services.

Public Health Glasgow offered advice in preparation for our service, which was instrumental and reassuring. Procedures around social distancing and PPE were introduced. Persuading guests to wear masks in communal areas was challenging but became easier as the season progressed. Staff were vigilant about symptoms, scanning body temperature when necessary and keeping communal touch points regularly sanitised.

Although a handful of guests were tested for Covid-19, we only had one positive result. It was straightforward to isolate that guest safely for the correct number of days, delivering food to their room. We were relieved when it was clear that we had prevented all transmission and no further cases were detected.



PPE was in constant use at the OWC.



Police engagement

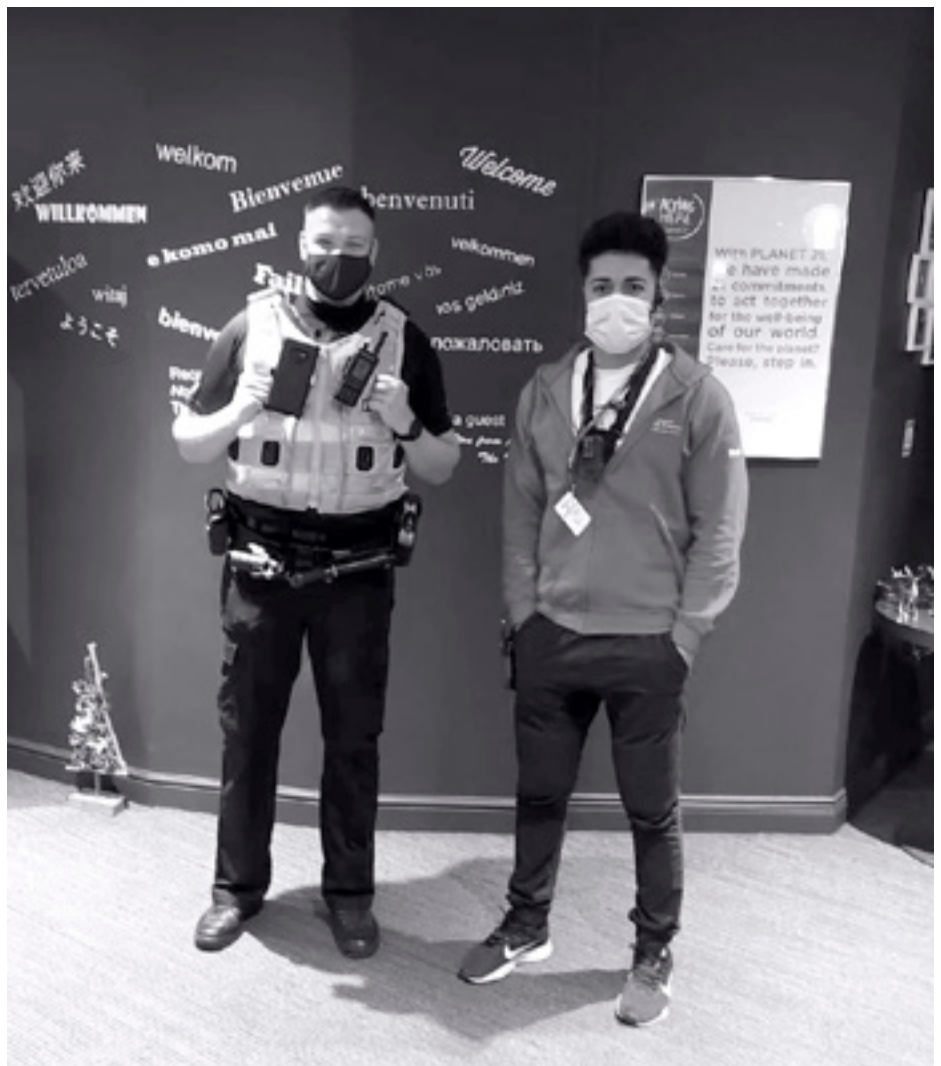
|| The OWC has been of fantastic benefit to the most vulnerable persons in our city during unprecedented times. The staff strived and succeeded in identifying and implementing longer-term positive outcomes for the residents.

—Iain Sibbald
Communities Inspector,
Glasgow City Centre,
Police Scotland

Overseeing our guests during the day, as well as overnight, meant that we more frequently observed guests in vulnerable circumstances.

This is reflected in the increase of our telephone calls to Police non-emergency 101. Most of these calls were made in regard to vulnerable guests who had not returned to the OWC.

The team also assisted in identifying four people who had been reported missing. There were six emergency 999 calls throughout the season, a decrease from 14 the previous winter.



Police brought guests to the OWC who urgently needed a safe place to stay.



Health

Venture Medical once again provided training in First Aid tailored to situations we were most likely to encounter and NHS Scotland provided naloxone training.

Our team only administered naloxone once this year—which is in stark contrast to previous years at the night shelter where it was used far more frequently. Staff called an ambulance four times during the winter season, down from 19 calls in 2019/20.

We conducted welfare checks at 7:00 am, 1:00 pm, 6:00 pm, and 11:00 pm to ascertain how our guests were coping and quickly identify issues of concern. Guests who presented to us with additional health concerns were checked more regularly.

This year we welcomed the Turning Point Mobile IEP (Injecting Equipment Provision) van, which came along every night for the first two months. Due to little uptake of this service we agreed their time would be better spent at other sites used across the city and if we required their assistance we could ask them to visit. In addition, the Phoenix Pharmacy team came on site on multiple occasions to supply medication.



The health and wellbeing of our guests is a priority in the OWC.



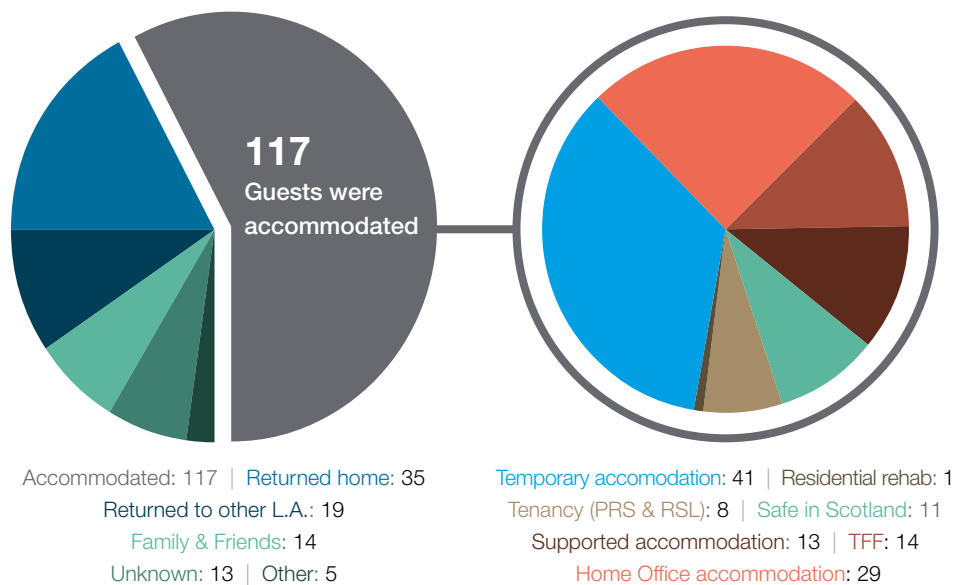
Outcomes

In previous years, we would see some guests move into temporary accommodation only to lose it a few days later. This year that rarely happened, mostly due to availability of support staff in other accommodation units and the ongoing contact of our HSOs.

Figure 6: Outcomes for guests leaving OWC shows the breakdown of different destinations for the guests leaving the hotel. Within the duration of the season, some guests moved into temporary accommodation and then moved again into another form of accommodation – e.g. a TFF (Temporary Furnished Flat) or Tenancy.

These second moves were often supported by our HSO staff who made themselves available for all guests leaving the OWC. Figure 6 shows the current outcome for guests as of the beginning of April 2021, just after the closure of the OWC. The HSO roles are still ongoing and even at the time of writing we are still supporting guests to move into their own tenancies.

Figure 6: Outcomes for guests leaving OWC



From December to March, more than 57% of guests were accommodated. In addition, a further 17% returned home, 7% went to stay with friends or family, and 11 of the 19 who returned to their own local authority area also went to stay with friends or family. Therefore 87% of our guests had a positive outcome; an increase of 6% from last year.

Some guests leave without an outcome nor any indication of where they are heading. This season 6% of guests' outcomes are unknown. We managed to decrease this number from the previous year, mainly due to the opportunity to build stronger relationships with our guests as we had them on site 24-hours a day.

Outcomes *cont.*

|| Many of our international guests were so grateful for being able to stay at the OWC—even to the point of tears.

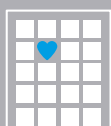
—Phil Wray
Head of Projects,
Glasgow City Mission

Unfortunately, we still experienced great challenges in gaining positive outcomes for EU guests who had no recourse to public funds. Traditional routes of accommodation were limited for these guests.

The EU Settlement Scheme was the most appropriate pathway for most of these individuals, and they were linked in with specialist staff from Simon Community Scotland and the Citizens Rights Project. However, it was an exceedingly slow process with many guests still waiting on decisions regarding their status when the OWC closed on 31 March. EU nationals represented 16% of our guests yet accounted for 28% of bed nights. Our sector must continue to strive to improve the outcomes for EU nationals.

Our International (non-EU) guests required the greatest number of bed nights—53% of the total. It felt like we were witnessing an increase in the number of guests who were seeking asylum using our service. However, data showed it was merely a result of International guests accounting for a higher proportion of total guests (36% compared to 9%–15% over the past four years, see Figure 2), and staying for much longer (11 nights, compared to 3–6 nights in previous years, see Figure 5.)

Due to the complex nature of these cases, a large proportion of time was spent on ensuring these guests received the best possible outcome and appropriate support. The Scottish Refugee Council worked closely with us on these cases, as did Migrant Help and the British Red Cross. Each of these services referred guests to the OWC throughout the season, and maintained casework whilst guests were resident with us. This occasionally required staff to make, and be on hold for, lengthy phone calls (three hours was a record!). Meanwhile, we made sure they were on the waiting list for Safe in Scotland—one of our partner agencies providing accommodation specifically for rights exhausted or destitute asylum seekers. This perseverance paid off as we saw 29 guests move into Home Office (Mears) accommodation.





Staff ensured the safety and care of OWC guests, including their pets.



Lessons learned

|| A guest who struggled to settle in became highly agitated and had suicidal thoughts. Having someone from the OWC, whom he trusted, and follow up visits from OWC staff were greatly appreciated.

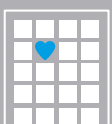
—Wendy Milne
Safe in Scotland

Following the closure of the service, the de-briefing with partners, the feedback from guests and volunteers and an evaluation of the project as a whole—evidence points to this being a highly effective model of providing crisis, low-threshold, emergency accommodation.

A daytime support service, coupled with overnight single-room accommodation supported by a wide range of specialist partners, greatly increases the opportunity not merely to gain a positive outcome but achieve the best possible outcome for a guest.

Having staff always available greatly enhanced our ability to build trust, be consistent, and work towards guests' goals. Individual rooms gave them their own space and allowed them to settle into the service at their own pace, whilst staff monitored their wellbeing. Partners are utterly indispensable, and must be a prerequisite ingredient for any similar project working in other cities. A service like the OWC does not tend to see guests who neatly fall into recognised 'categories' of status or need. By definition, the project ends up welcoming those whose cases and needs are complex. Their circumstances do not fit with definitions that other statutory services may have set and thus it is vital to have a patient and persevering staff team plus dedicated experts available.

In a post-Covid world, the service could be improved by having partner staff attend on site for face-to-face conversations with guests rather than over the phone. This would particularly benefit our International guests who struggle with English. If the service were to be repeated next winter, we would make other small improvements such as adjusting shift patterns and receiving new guests at a different time.



Conclusion

|| We have been impressed by how OWC responded to the pandemic and adapted its service so quickly. Having staff available 24/7 made communication much easier between partners, and resulted in quicker results for guests.

—Angela Vance
Lodging House Mission

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the national trauma of a pandemic, significant advances were made across the homelessness sector in 2020.

Changes to the way in which homeless presentations could be made, the increase in capacity of temporary accommodation, the heightened drive to get everyone off the streets and renewed efforts to work in partnership all resulted in a winter accommodation service where everyone who needed a bed was offered one. Our desire is to strive alongside partners to ensure that these gains do not melt away once the public health crisis is over.

There still remains a great challenge on how to accommodate individuals from out with the UK. After 30 June, many EU nationals will find themselves in a similar predicament to other immigrants—in that they have no recourse to public funds. The threat of destitution for a small number of these individuals, and for asylum seekers who are appeal rights exhausted, is very real and could lead to them sleeping rough.

We believe that until accommodation can be offered on the same day, to all who are in danger of sleeping rough, there will remain a need for a winter accommodation service to act as a safety net. This is equally true for Glaswegians who find themselves homeless late in the day, Scots arriving from other local authorities, other UK citizens who find themselves stuck in Glasgow, and those who have no recourse to public funds.



Partners and funders

With special thanks to all our partners:

Aspire	Marie Trust
Blue Triangle Housing Association	McGhees Bakery
British Red Cross	Mills Milk
Bullet Express	NHS (Naloxone Training)
Citizens Rights Project	Police Scotland
Glasgow City HSCP	Safe in Scotland
Glasgow Street Pastors	Salvas, Conflict Management Training
Govan Community Project	Scotia Radio
Govan Law Centre	Scottish Ambulance Service
Healing For The Heart	Scottish Refugee Council
Homeless Project Scotland	Shelter Scotland
Housing First Consortium (Glasgow)	Simon Community Scotland
Hunter Street Homeless Services	Social Bite
ITRS Group (Database services)	Turning Point Scotland
Lodging House Mission	Venture Medical

We are extremely thankful to the trusts, foundations, Housing Associations and individuals who helped fund the OWC. These include:

Rangers Charity Foundation
The Souter Charitable Trust
Urban Potential
Social Bite
Springboard Charitable Trust
Blue Triangle
Trafalgar Housing Association
Partick Housing Association
The Baird Trust



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