

Week 4: Woolwich

The projects being supported by the Bishop's Lent Call in Woolwich Episcopal Area in 2022 are Robes, a charity which helps homeless people in two south London boroughs find their way to a better quality of life, and the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter, a local charity which provides warmth, emergency accommodation and support for the homeless in Greenwich during the winter months.

The Robes project

Helping people out of homelessness is at the heart of the Robes project. The charity has close partnerships with 29 churches and community centres, 750 volunteers, and other charities and day centres in the area, and primarily focuses on providing local homeless adults with shelter, food and laundry facilities. In addition, it provides advice on gaining access to housing, welfare benefits, health support, legal advice, employment and training. Weekly support packages are also provided by winter night shelter teams.



A Robes guest enjoys a hot drink © Eve Milner

The Robes project does a lot of its work in the Southwark Archdeaconry, although it also works in Lambeth, and a sleepout to help raise funds for its work is held at Southwark Cathedral each year.

In 2020, Robes opened a Tuesday Club in partnership with Holy Trinity, Clapham. Here, guests can access hot lunches, hot drinks, care packages, clothing items and advice. The club operates an open-door policy, welcoming anyone seeking its services and allowing the charity to reach a wider group of vulnerable individuals within the community and tackle issues that put people at risk of homelessness. Since it opened, the Tuesday Club has provided 2,223 hot meals as a takeaway service, as well as 1,500 care packages and 168 advice sessions. Recently, a new Thursday Club has opened at the Elephant and Castle operating on the Tuesday Club model.

At the height of COVID-19, Robes was unable to operate a church-based winter night shelter. Instead, it worked in partnership with Southwark Council to support the stay of 37 guests at Best Western, Peckham and to plan their moving on. Accommodation was also provided in Friendship House, in Borough, for 11 guests who had been referred from various agencies for the month of April 2021.



*The Bishop
of Southwark's*

LENT CALL 2022

*"My people will live
in peaceful dwelling
places, in secure
homes, in undisturbed
places of rest."*

— Isaiah 32:18



*Raising money for
the dispossessed*



Lent Call 2022

The Bishop of Southwark's Lent Fund Registered Charity No 1075122
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All these guests had COVID-safe individual rooms with en suite facilities. The main focus during their stay was to ensure guests' physical needs were being met, with 16 Shelter teams donating and providing weekly care packages. In total, 471 care packages were provided to 48 guests, who also received laundry vouchers, food vouchers, clothing, phones and tablets, and weekly check-in calls.

Adam's story

Unable to rely on friends any longer for a place to stay, Adam became homeless and came to the Robes shelter. For all his determination, getting back into work was proving impossible without secure housing. After his stay with Robes, he secured private rented accommodation in Lewisham, a borough in which he feels happily integrated, enjoying its cultural diversity and sense of community. Two years have passed since Adam came to Robes. He is thriving and actively involved in local community projects, co-curating an exhibition in the People's Heritage Museum exploring the transatlantic Slave Trade and its implications for the local area today. He is also a Trustee for a local charity in Deptford.

Greenwich Winter Night Shelter (GWNS)

GWNS was first established in 2014. Its mission is to provide a safe, warm and judgement-free environment for people experiencing homelessness to recharge and be supported into more sustainable housing.

GWNS' values are: to provide hospitality, offering a safe and respectful space, meeting guests' practical needs and giving them dignity; to offer inclusiveness, welcoming guests and volunteers from any background; and to be rooted in the community and show Christianity in action.

Since its establishment, GWNS has operated a rotating-venue night shelter for 15 homeless people with the support of a large body of volunteers. In 2022, the charity is moving away from this model to set up a static shelter with single room accommodation. Doing this has been a long-term vision for the charity as moving venues each night was proving challenging for guests who had to find the shelter each night and also had nowhere safe to leave their belongings during the day.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has offered GWNS a lease on a building in Eltham and supported it with renovation works. The centre offers individual rooms to guests and it is hoped that year-round support can be developed. There will be nine single rooms, including a women's-only wing with separate bathroom facilities and a large communal area where everyone can eat and socialise together. GWNS will also be launching a day centre from the venue where guests will be able to receive healthcare, specialist advice and have a safe place to spend the day. GWNS hopes that having one single venue will provide more stability and consistency for guests and will help it to work towards breaking the cycle of homelessness.

In Isaiah 32:18, God's wish is for his people to "live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest". Please consider what you can give to help bring hope to those who are without accommodation in the Woolwich Episcopal Area and beyond. Find out more at southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



Preparing to open the doors on the new static shelter.

