

A Christmas Message from Homeless Care

Homelessness is not 'going away' despite the combined efforts of organisations working in the field supporting those in crisis. It happens to people of all ages, men and women alike, and it could happen to any one of us.

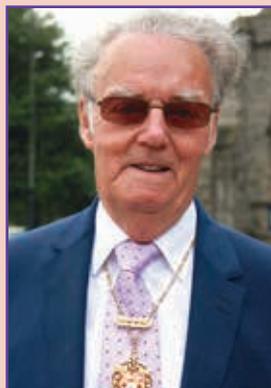
As a result of this increase in homelessness we have become a LIFELINE to more and more people by:

- Providing hot and cold nutritious meals - breakfasts, dinners and pack-up on a daily basis.
- Providing housing, debt and credit and employment advice with specialist support.
- Providing the support opportunities for those struggling to overcome dependencies such as drink & drugs.
- Providing health check opportunities to help our clients recover and/or stay healthy.
- Offering access to these services all the year round - day to day basis.

Homeless Care offers these men and women the chances to learn new skills and gain employment and helps them become part of the community.

All this cost money but you can help us to give longer-term support and life skills to homeless people by donating just a small amount now. Your support could help homeless men and women in our community to face the future and rebuild their lives. Thank You.

Mike FitzGerald,
Chairman Homeless Care



What it means to Maidstone people to have a Day Centre.



Sarah McCloy was homeless in London last year and went through a lot of trauma but came out the other side and is now safely living at Lily Smith House next door to the day centre. "I was unaware of services available to me at the time and I feel it would be good to help make others in Maidstone aware of their options if they are or ever find themselves homeless." says Sarah.

"Since coming to Lily Smith House back in July 2014 I have turned my life around completely from being an addict on drugs/alcohol hoping to become a volunteer for aspire2be in the near future. I have been abstinent since the day I left London and never going back down that road again as I recognised I was hiding my problems, now I just deal with them as they arise. I am also now Volunteer Recruitment Co-Ordinator for Cancer Research. After just 3 weeks of working on the Maidstone shop floor I am now seeking more volunteers across Kent.

My life won't ever be the same again I lost my children when I was going through a mental breakdown last year which saw me flee to London from my hometown Tonbridge and I suffer each day because of that, but I would like to show others that with the services available to them there is light at the end of the tunnel." Sarah put together an interview that has been used through social media and we thought you might like to see it.

1. When was the MDC founded and by whom?

Teachers Patricia McCabe and Mary Harvey and pupils from Maidstone Girls' Grammar School provided soup and sandwiches to the homeless almost 30 years ago. In 1986 the charity Maidstone Christian Care was founded to support homeless and vulnerable people and as well as the soup runs, volunteers cooked hot meals each week at the United Reformed Church in Week Street. The first Maidstone Day Centre was opened in 1995 in a ground floor flat at Lenworth House and in 2004 we moved into our present home at 15 Knightrider Street. Goodsell House is a hostel for ten people that in 1976 was set up as trust by the founder of the local building firm to provide accommodation for those in need. Over the years many



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eg CARE88 £10

You can also Gift Aid support - see rear cover

residents have been grateful for respite from the streets and a chance to turn their lives around.

2. What does the centre actually offer and who is eligible to use it? Can you also refer users onto extra services you feel would be of benefit to them?

It supports homeless and vulnerable clients, this may include people who are sofa surfing, sleeping in a car or tent as well as sleeping on the streets. Maidstone Day Centre opens weekdays to provide hot showers, clean clothes and good home cooked food to those in need.



Our staff refer clients with health problems (we have the regular services of a doctor) and help with benefit and housing applications. We signpost clients to other agencies such as Porchlight, CAB, Social Services, Maidstone Borough Council, MIND and many more where they are able to access further support. We have a new leaflet that describes all of the services we offer and we publish a quarterly newsletter Threshold. There are also two websites www.maidstonedaycentre.org.uk and www.homelesscare.org.uk/ Our community food share scheme Food for Thought collects surplus food items from local traders, and redistributes them to school breakfast clubs, hostels, clubs for elderly men and women, individuals and families in crisis. Goodsell House gives homeless people respite and a roof over their heads while they prepare to move into independent living and a better future. Maidstone Christian Care continues to be our link with the churches who from the start have given us much support.

3. What times/days can the MDC be accessed?

Maidstone Day Centre current opening hours for clients: Monday to Thursday 8.00am to 1.30pm; Friday 8.00am to noon; Saturday 9.00am to noon. The office is staffed weekday afternoons Monday to Thursday until 3.00pm. If you would like to know more ring the MDC manager Zofia on 01622 674064

4. What are your policies on drug, alcohol use and violent behaviour within the MDC and can people still access your services if they are using certain substances?

All clients sign up to the day centre rules and are fully aware that no drugs or alcohol are allowed in the centre. In order to protect the safety of all our clients individuals under the influence will not be admitted. We work closely with CRI, Social Services, Kenwood Trust, the police and other agencies so are able to offer support to clients who have substance misuse problems and help them to move forward. We are a key partner in a Street Population group that include all these agencies who meet to address named individuals needs – most have multiples issues)

5. Are there any costs involved to access the facilities available?

There are no costs to clients when they first come through our doors but once in receipt of State Benefits we charge a nominal £2 per day towards all the services we provide. As well as helping towards Day Centre running costs, the charge aims to encourage good budgeting so that when people are housed they will manage more easily on a limited income. Each client's ability to pay is considered on an individual basis.

6. What benefits do you feel you provide compared to other services in the area?

There are no similar services in the area. As well as providing assistance with issues such as housing, benefits, mental and physical health, debt advice, career guidance, we offer a place of warmth and safety for the day, a respite from the dangers of sleeping on the streets. Another important facility is the use of the Day Centre postal address which enables clients to apply for benefits and work. (Employers are unlikely to be interested in employing someone without that, even though he or she may have the right skills for the job) Our staff are non judgemental, offering a sympathetic listening ear to the hopes and concerns of the men and women who come to us for help. Their practical help and encouragement aims to raise the low self esteem often suffered by those from chaotic and abusive backgrounds. By working with us and our many partner agencies, clients can receive the support they will need to manage their own lives and a brighter future.

7. Is the MDC just run by a group of volunteers if so do you require anymore and how can they apply?

The centre is run by professional paid staff supported by volunteers who come in to help with the Food for Thought project by driving to collect and deliver. We have an interview process for prospective volunteers - contact the manager.

8. Do you have any plans for any improvements or extra services within 2015?

Yes, we are in the process of buying The Cricketers as a standalone property, subject to planning permission, with seven rooms which we will use as 'move-on accommodation. A really important initiative.

9. Christmas, New Year & winter must undoubtedly be the worst time for anyone without a home so what extra

services are available during this period.

The day centre is working with the winter shelter; this runs during the winter months so homeless people have access to the day centre during the day and somewhere dry to stay overnight. We always provide a Christmas dinner for our clients, and this year The Hengist restaurant has kindly offered to supply all the festive food. We will provide clients with extra food provisions over the Christmas period. We also supply warm clothes, sleeping bags, tents and blankets for the clients all year round for those in need. When the winter shelter is not open we will find accommodation for clients if the weather is extreme.

Homeless Care wish you a Merry Christmas and thank you for all your help throughout the year!

Friends of the Maidstone Day Centre in thought and word and deed.

The Friends of Maidstone Day Centre (FOMDC) started out as a group of local Christians who want to practically live out their faith by doing something to help within the local community. This desire led them to making contact with the Maidstone Day Centre and offering to help in any way they could. Some of the first jobs were to collect and sort food donations from local supermarkets which had been donated by customers to the Kent Messenger's Christmas Appeal. The Day Centre staff were delighted with the extra pairs of hands at a very busy time of year when they still had to cope with their everyday work with homeless men and women. It was the start of what has become a very special partnership.

After a short time the group was asked by the Day Centre Trustees to consider forming a Friends group and Friends of Maidstone Day Centre was officially launched in June 2011 at the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the Maidstone Day Centre. The aim of the Friends is to support the Day Centre in their work with homeless and vulnerable people in Maidstone.

Since the launch, the Friends have been involved in a number of fund raising activities as well as taking part in local community events in order to raise awareness of the charity and its work. One of the biggest undertakings each year is managing the Christmas "You Can Help" appeal. The friends co-ordinate the setting up of collection points in various schools supermarkets and organisations, and ensure the subsequent food items are collected regularly or at the end of the appeal.

The Friends today are still a relatively small group of people, and we would welcome more members. If you have an interest in helping the homeless and vulnerable in the Maidstone area, and would like to join us, please contact the Chairman, Paul Rodman on 07966 424945, or the Day Centre manager Zofia Grzymala on 01622 674064, or email the secretary Glenda Lambert on

friendssec@maidstonedaycentre.org.uk

We are always grateful for your help to raise funds for Maidstone Day Centre.

How can I help?

- Join the Friends of Maidstone Day Care, new members are needed and are very welcome. Please call or email the contacts above.
- Raise money for the Friends of Maidstone Day Care by organising an event such as a table sale, a sponsored walk, a quiz night or charity football match.
- Donate a regular amount by standing order to our charity by completing a form, available today or by contacting us on the above telephone number.
- Arrange collection of non perishable food at your place of work, school, or somewhere else where people gather, prior to Christmas. Contact the Friends to arrange collection.
- Contribute by donating food at one of the collection centres. Several local supermarkets participate and details can be found in the Kent Messenger from the end of November each year. Or look on our website for list of participating centres of collection.

For a free copy of our newsletter Threshold: please e-mail your name & address to mdc@homelessinmaidstone.org.uk or write to the Day Centre or see it online from www.maidstonedaycentre.org.uk

If you would like to receive Threshold by email please email events@maidstonedaycentre.org.uk

Our latest Homeless Care leaflet for the homeless and hungry

If you or anyone you know needs our help then this leaflet is for you.

Available from the Day Centre in Knight Rider Street & the Job Centre.

Or call 01622 674064.

**Homeless?
Hungry?**
Homeless Care
can help you



Contact . . .

Homeless Care
MAIDSTONE
DAY CENTRE

01622 674064

GIFT AID DECLARATION To: The Hon Treasurer, Homeless Care, 6 Denton Close, Willington Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8ER

I wish Homeless Care to treat all donations I have made in the last four years and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations

Signature _____

Date _____

Full Name (in caps) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

Email _____

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities (including churches) and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to, will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Please notify the Treasurer of Homeless Care if you wish to cancel this declaration, change your address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income or capital gains.

Registered charity number 1151412

Please help us to help others

Maidstone Day Centre is there to help homeless and vulnerable people turn their lives around. The initial need is usually for hot showers, a good home cooked meal, clean clothes and a warm sleeping bag for cold nights. After that work starts on obtaining Benefits, medical attention and addressing any drug/alcohol or mental health needs. The search for accommodation will be next on the list, way before job seeking, because you are unlikely to find work if you do not have an address.

We rely on donations and grants to run this service and we are always grateful to receive financial support whether by regular giving, wills or a one off gift.

Increase the value of your gift

Using Gift Aid means that for every pound you give, we get an extra 25 pence from the Inland Revenue, helping your donation to go further.

This means that £10.00 can be turned into £12.50 just so long as donations are made through Gift Aid. Imagine what a difference that could make to our work and it won't cost you a penny more.

So if you would like your donation to go further, please Gift Aid it by completing the form on the top right and returning it to Homeless Care.

How to give

By cheque payable to: Homeless Care and send to: The Treasurer, Homeless Care, 6 Denton Close, Maidstone, ME15 8ER or by direct transfer to Homeless Care's bank account: Sort Code 40-52-40 Account Number 00023904

Log on to our website: www.maidstonedaycentre.org.uk and click on the 'donate' button on one of the pages.

To find out more about giving through regular donations, wills or with cash, please ring The Hon. Treasurer on 01622 202239

Happy New Year everyone!

Helping homeless and vulnerable people at Maidstone Day Centre

Text CARE88 £2 / £5 / £10 to 70070 to donate now. eg CARE88 £5

Homeless Care
Registered charity number 1151412



Thank you to the Hengist Restaurant



Hengist Restaurant believe that everyone in the UK should have the opportunity to enjoy Christmas, so they are donating Christmas Lunch to homeless and vulnerable people at Maidstone Day Centre on Tuesday 23 December.

All our clients will have a superb traditional Christmas lunch courtesy of the Hengist Restaurant.

In addition if you book Christmas Day Lunch at The Hengist Restaurant in Aylesford, £10 per person will be donated to the Homeless Care charity. Let's work to together and make a difference, please call 01622 885800 or go online www.hengistrestaurant.co.uk

Thanks Hengist!

Chairman: Mike FitzGerald. Company Secretary: Angela Clay **Maidstone Day Centre** 15 Knightrider Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6LP
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