

HELPING VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY



COLD WEATHER NIGHT SHELTER IMPACT REPORT 2026

Overview

In December 2025, the shelter opened its door for the second year at Alma Beacon. Just like its beginnings as 'More than a Shelter' back in 2018, it offered something simple but vital: a safe place to come in from the cold, a bed for the night, a warm meal, and the reassurance of being welcomed with kindness. For many guests, that welcome mattered just as much as the practical help they received with their meals, laundry, showering and more. Our feedback survey from both guests and volunteers points to a shelter that felt safe, friendly and well run. Guests described good food, a clean and comfortable space, and a place where they felt cared for.

Impact Highlights 2025



10 WEEKS



38



**OVER 1,000
meals served**



**15 BEDS
814 occupied**

**INDIVIDUAL
GUESTS**



**80+
volunteers**

One of the most encouraging parts of this season was the increased support offered behind the scenes to work closely with guests around their wider needs. We are particularly proud of the number of guests housed which was made possible through close collaboration with the council, with Kelly's ongoing partnership playing an important role, and through a one-off opportunity linked to changes in Slough that opened additional routes into accommodation.

Impact Highlights 2026



15 WEEKS



36



**OVER 1,500+
meals served**



**22 BEDS
1445 occupied**

**INDIVIDUAL
GUESTS**



**100 +
volunteers**

This year, however, the operation was on a very different scale. With increased support from the council, Alma Beacon was able to offer more beds, more weeks and more support. To take on such a challenge, we relied on a very strong shelter team - both in terms of the shelter committee, the Windsor Homeless Project team and very importantly the night shelter managers. Throughout the season, with their steadiness and commitment, Jon and Alex gave the whole operation a dependable center. We are also especially grateful to Elliot, who stepped up whenever either of them was ill, helping to ensure the shelter stayed open every single night it had hoped to.

The team was also better prepared for the realities of running a larger shelter. Safeguarding expectations were enforced more firmly on site, helping to create clear boundaries while still offering compassionate care. Volunteers noted that the shelter was calmer, behaviour was generally good, and relationships between guests, staff and volunteers were positive.

That atmosphere was shaped by an extraordinary volunteer community, with some serving 10+ shifts, building trust and familiarity with guests over the course of the winter. Many spoke about the positive atmosphere, the joy of getting to know guests, and the sense that small acts of service — a hot drink, a meal, a conversation, help with washing clothes really did make a difference. Alma Beacon is deeply grateful for every volunteer who cooked, cleaned, listened, welcomed at the door, stayed awake through the night or quietly did the jobs no one sees.



There is much to celebrate in this year's story, and we are deeply grateful to those who made this season financially possible. We had so many partners and to name a few Ascot Race course whose generous donation allowed for the staffing of the managers, the local churches and Windsor Farm shop which donated food. Finally, the Sing-a-thon organised by our own volunteers was also a significant fund contributor.

This winter showed again what can happen when a community chooses to respond generously to homelessness. More people were welcomed, more people were supported, and more people moved on towards greater stability because the right partnerships, volunteers and funding were in place.

N's Story

"A warm bed, a hot meal, and a way forward"



N is 28. By the time he arrived at Alma Beacon's night shelter just before Christmas, he had already been homeless several times in his life. This time, it started with something that could happen to anyone: he lost his job just as the year closed, when work was quiet. No longer able to afford nearly £850-£900 a month for his single room, he found himself facing eviction and the prospect of having nowhere to go.

N talks about how easy it is to slip into homelessness when the cost of living is so high and the margin for error is so small. Describing what it feels like to be homeless, the image that comes to mind is surprisingly ordinary and painfully stark. "Being homeless is like being an outdoor cat that's allowed to come in out of the cold every now and again," he says. There is nowhere really to stop: "you're either in a café where there's noise, in a park, in a pub – wherever you go, there is no peace or quiet." The fear of what happens next is also very present. N remembers a dream he had: him, packing his backpack to go somewhere, walking out the door, and then waking up in his bed and feeling huge relief that he wasn't still searching for somewhere to go.

The night shelter changed that rhythm. Knowing there was a warm bed and a hot meal waiting gave him something solid to hold onto each day. He talks about coming in from the cold and feeling the contrast immediately: lights low, guests lying on their beds or on the sofa, "tranquillity" instead of constant noise.

Everything about the shelter – the hot drinks on tap, the showers, the laundry, and especially the food ("There were some dinners that were absolutely fantastic.") added up to more than just survival. Together, they made the days and nights bearable.

For N, the shelter was also a place of connection and a doorway to wider support. Through the Windsor Homeless project and Kelly, he was able to move into accommodation after only 6 weeks at the shelter. "Without this place, I would not be where I am right now. I have a set of keys. I have my own bathroom. I have a kitchenette. I have an entire floor of a house to myself," he says. It is not perfect but it is safe, warm and his.

The shelter also gave glimpses of hope in community. N speaks with affection about seeing volunteers around town and being able to say hello, remembering a positive time instead of only crisis. He also helped another guest into work bringing him along after being offered a day's labour himself. Moments like this, and the relationships he formed at Alma Beacon, have drawn him closer to his faith and renewed his determination to move forwards rather than be pulled into drugs or crime.

Today, N is living in rental accommodation, with a contract until August and a clear goal: to complete the final pieces of training and licensing he needs to work again in the construction industry. He knows the stakes are high – he talks about needing "a bit of a miracle" to get there, but he is focused on moving on.

He describes Alma Beacon as 'a necessity, not a luxury' for people like him who are so close to the edge – "a place where, no matter where you have been that day, you know you have a warm bed and a hot meal to go to, which is what anybody would want."



Volunteer Insights

Rachel:

"This is my very first time volunteering. I have had the best evening. I was scared, but meeting the guests and talking to them, most of them just want the company, the fun and the friendliness. We played games, we laughed. You just feel like you are giving so much and nothing is wanted in return. It's lovely!"

Sarah:

"I love volunteering at the shelter. Great to meet the guests and to chat with them. It makes me feel good, and happy to give back to the community"

Ellie:

"It's a really humbling space, genuinely full of care and consideration. Just listening to some of the stories you realise it could happen to any one of us"

Community Feedback

"I believe that the Windsor Night Shelter made a significant difference this year to the lives of those sleeping rough both in Windsor and beyond. To provide anyone who is homeless with an opportunity to sleep safely through the night and to get that much needed, yet rarely obtained rest, is so important and I know from speaking to those guests of the shelter, that every one of them benefitted from this and in some cases were able to use the stability and safety provided at the Alma Beacon as a springboard to start rebuilding their lives. Having the consistency of the same bed in the same building, where there is warmth and food and the most compassionate and supportive volunteers, has had a remarkable impact and has allowed many of the guests to have a moments pause in order to think about their lives, their choices and their goals and for some, positive change has started to happen. Since we founded the Windsor Homeless Project back in 2009, the idea of offering overnight provision was always something we had hoped for, yet had seemed out of reach. Now though, thanks to everyone involved, we are able to offer that vital support year on year which is something that the Alma Beacon charity and every one of our fantastic shelter volunteers can be proud of."



**Police Community
Support Officer
Dave Bullock:**

What Next...

Plans for the 2026/2027 Night Shelter are already well underway, and we are excited to share that a series of fundraising events are being organised this summer to help support the shelter and the vital work it carries out. We would love for you to be part of that journey.

If you have a fundraising idea you would like to propose, we would be delighted to hear it please don't hesitate to get in touch with the team. Equally, if you would prefer to fundraise through a personal activity or challenge, we are here to support you every step of the way. Simply reach out and we will help you set up donation pages, provide branding, and proudly promote your endeavour to our wider community.

You can contact us by emailing Ellie directly at ellie@almabeacon.org we would love to hear from you.

If you would like to make a direct donation to Alma Beacon, you can do so quickly and easily through our JustGiving page:
www.justgiving.com/campaign/almabeacon

Alternatively, please scan the QR code to donate.

Every contribution, however large or small, makes a real and lasting difference to those who need it most.



Once again, thank you for your continued support.

