Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre

Bethany Christian Trust

Annual Report

2024-2025

Introduction

Welcome

The Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre (RRWC) is a lifeline emergency accommodation for those who are at risk of rough sleeping over the winter months in Edinburgh.

This unique service accommodates people who are without a home and in need of support. Over the last five winter seasons, based in the Haymarket Hub Hotel, the Welcome Centre has accommodated 4,359 individuals.

This season, the Welcome Centre encountered the same challenges as the previous, with a lack of available accommodation across the City of Edinburgh. We saw high numbers of individuals who were referred by partner agencies or presented in-person at our service consistently throughout the season.

On average, 62 people presented at the service daily, with at least one person turned away due to capacity each day. The number of people turned away due to capacity was likely to be higher than our reported total due to multiple routes of presentation like phone calls which weren't always recorded. The service faced uncertainty in its continued use of the Haymarket Hub Hotel this season, due to the lack of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence at the hotel premises.

Partnership thanks

We have over 40 different partner agencies who provide a wide range of services, and it is thanks to these partners that so many of our guests continue to receive excellent assistance once they move on from the Welcome Centre.

Volunteers

Bethany Christian Trust has been supported by thousands of volunteers over the last 42 years. We are so grateful to all who have served us and our guests. The Welcome Centre guests have been looked after and very well fed by our different teams with many complimenting the volunteers for their efforts and the food they provided each night.

Special thanks

The City of Edinburgh Council (the CEC) and the Scottish Government have been instrumental in the success of the Welcome Centre, with essential financial provision for room purchasing, staffing costs, food costs for guests and door security. Along with this critical funding, both the Scottish Government and the CEC continued to be a huge support throughout the season with regular engagement with our service.

The leadership team

James Milligan	*Manager*
Simon Wakeling	*Deputy Manager*
Arran MacGregor	*Senior Team Leader*
Eleanor McLachlan	*Senior Team Leader & Administrator*

Inside the report

In this year's report, you will find information on the 2024-25 Welcome Centre season including reflections, statistics, good news stories and feedback quotes from guests.

* Names in stories have been changed to protect guest identities and are not connected to featured pictures.

** Images used with consent of those featured.

*** Unattributed quotes found throughout the report were shared directly by guests from the 2024-25 season.

What is the Welcome Centre?

What does the Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre service provide?

The Welcome Centre seeks to bring support to people where they are, looking holistically at their needs, not only with housing but in areas such as health, finance and addiction. This wraparound care is provided by a staff team and through access to many professionals from over forty partner services.

The Centre is staffed 24/7, which allows guests to access help anytime. The Welcome Centre team consisted of a manager, a deputy manager, two senior team leaders, five team leaders and eighteen project workers who worked day, night, and twilight shifts.

Someone who is booked into the Welcome Centre can expect to have their own room with ensuite facilities and food provision throughout the day.

Who is it for?

The Welcome Centre provides emergency accommodation for those who may otherwise find themselves homeless and on the streets. Due to a high tolerance, low-bar approach, the Welcome Centre can accommodate those who may be unable to access mainstream accommodation.

The service is available to anyone aged 16 or older.

After a decision by the hotel management, the Welcome Centre was not able to accommodate dogs this season. This resulted in us having to turn away individuals and their dogs from the very first day of the season. This coming year, we will advocate for dogs to be accommodated in the new Welcome Centre venue, alongside their owners, as we appreciate the value of this relationship and know that people would often rather sleep rough than give up their companion.

How can the service be accessed?

The Welcome Centre can be accessed by presenting as homeless to the CEC or by presenting directly to the Welcome Centre at the Haymarket Hub Hotel. Other organisations, such as Streetwork, also refer their clients directly to us.

> “I feel as if this is the first time I’ve been treated as a human being.”


Recharge
Marc O'Polo
DENIM

Impact

2024-25 Season

We were open for **181 nights** during the coldest part of the year

618 individual people accessed our service

58 nationalities were represented

11,583 times when a person was protected from sleeping on the streets for a night

62 people on average used the service every day

23,000† **meals** were provided by 40 church and 2 corporate volunteer catering teams

99% of known outcomes are positive††

† This number includes the roughly 6,270 breakfasts that were funded by the Scottish Government

†† 55% of outcomes are known

"I'm deeply appreciative for the help in my moment of crisis."

David's* story

Struggling with an alcohol addiction for many years, David was left homeless, without a job, and had stayed at the Welcome Centre on several occasions.

David confessed to Welcome Centre staff that he was so ashamed of his predicament that even his family did not know about his situation.

During his time at the Welcome Centre this season, David continued to use alcohol. However, in his desperation to be free from his addiction, he reached out to the staff for help. David was referred to Bethany Christian Trust's Bridge to Freedom outreach, and he quickly built a good relationship with its coordinator, Joe.

With Joe's help, David began to think seriously about recovery.

It was to the delight of the staff involved in David's support that a place became available in Bethany Christian Centre. David was accepted onto their drug and alcohol recovery programme, and he readily accepted.

A month later, we learned that David was doing well in his battle with alcohol misuse and was even volunteering for a few hours with Bethany's Logistics team.

Shaun's* story

Shaun came to the Welcome Centre after finding himself homeless due to a relationship breakdown with his wife. He came to us distressed and in need of support.

Shaun was so committed to finding a new home where he could have his children to stay, and, despite working full-time on night shifts, he made it a priority to present at his local council office.

However, due to the current housing crisis in Edinburgh, it was an uphill struggle and, feeling frustrated that there seemed to be no end in sight, Shaun started to give up hope of ever having his own home.

He shared his frustrations with the Welcome Centre team, and they came alongside him with encouragement to keep on going.

Shaun's perseverance finally paid off when, after months of presenting to the council, he was offered a fully furnished flat in a good area of Edinburgh and there was plenty of room for his family.

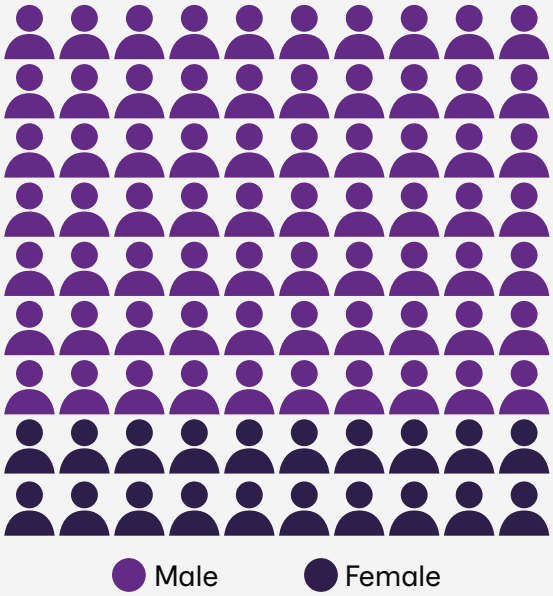
Distress quickly turned to elation for Shaun, and he expressed his thanks to the Welcome Centre staff for their support and encouragement.

*Names changed and guest identities are not connected to featured picture

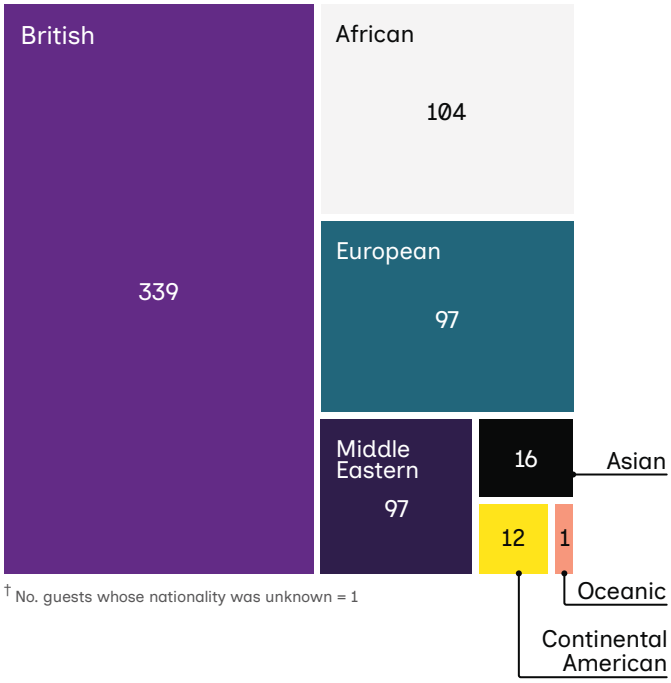
Demographics

Who stays at the Welcome Centre?

Gender breakdown of guests:

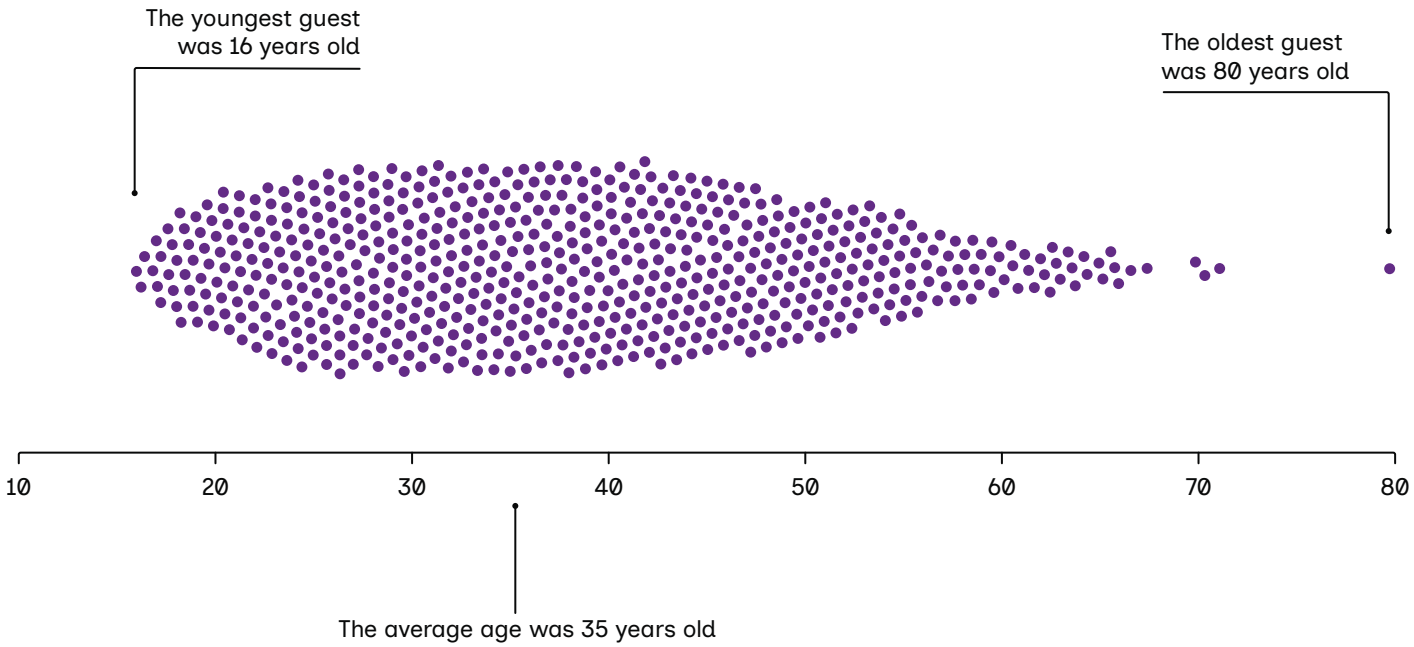


Nationality of guests:

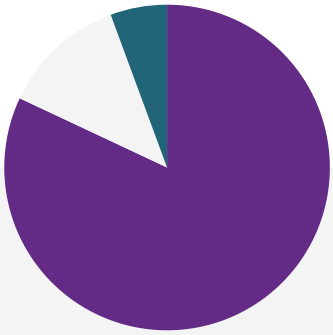


† No. guests whose nationality was unknown = 1

Age distribution of guests:



Eligibility for Public Funding:



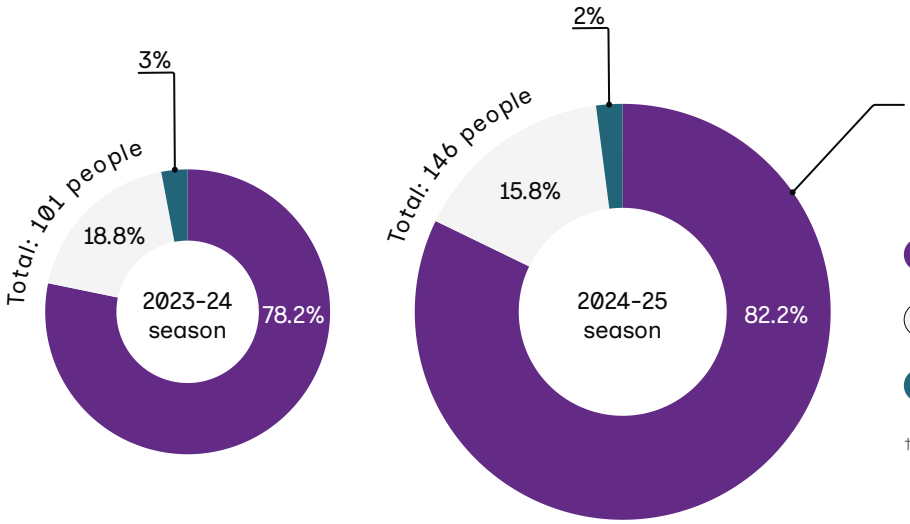
Recourse to Public Funds	494
No Recourse to Public Funds	67
Don't know	57

Length of time guests stayed:

Average stay
18
days

Longest stay
168
days

Asylum Seekers and Refugees:



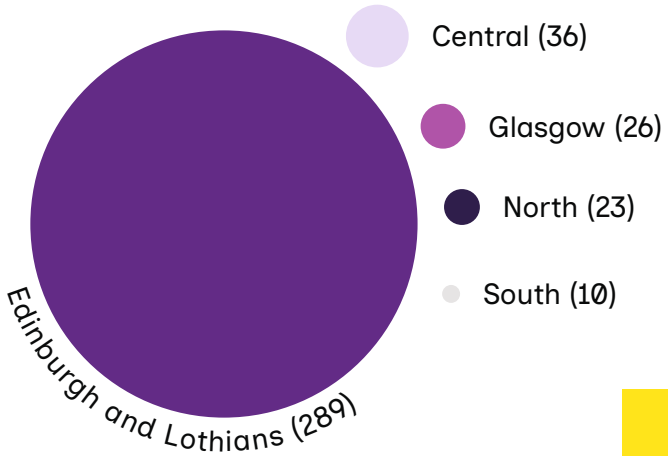
During the 2024-25 season, 24% of all guests have been involved in the asylum process. These charts show a breakdown of those 146 people (cf. 101 people in 2023-24)

- Refugees
- Asylum Seekers
- Failed Asylum Seekers††

††When someone applies for asylum and is unsuccessful

Where guests came from:

Scotland:



Rest of British Isles:

Midlands (37)	SW England (13)
NE England (37)	Ireland (5)
SE England (36)	Wales (3)
NW England (18)	Northern Ireland (3)

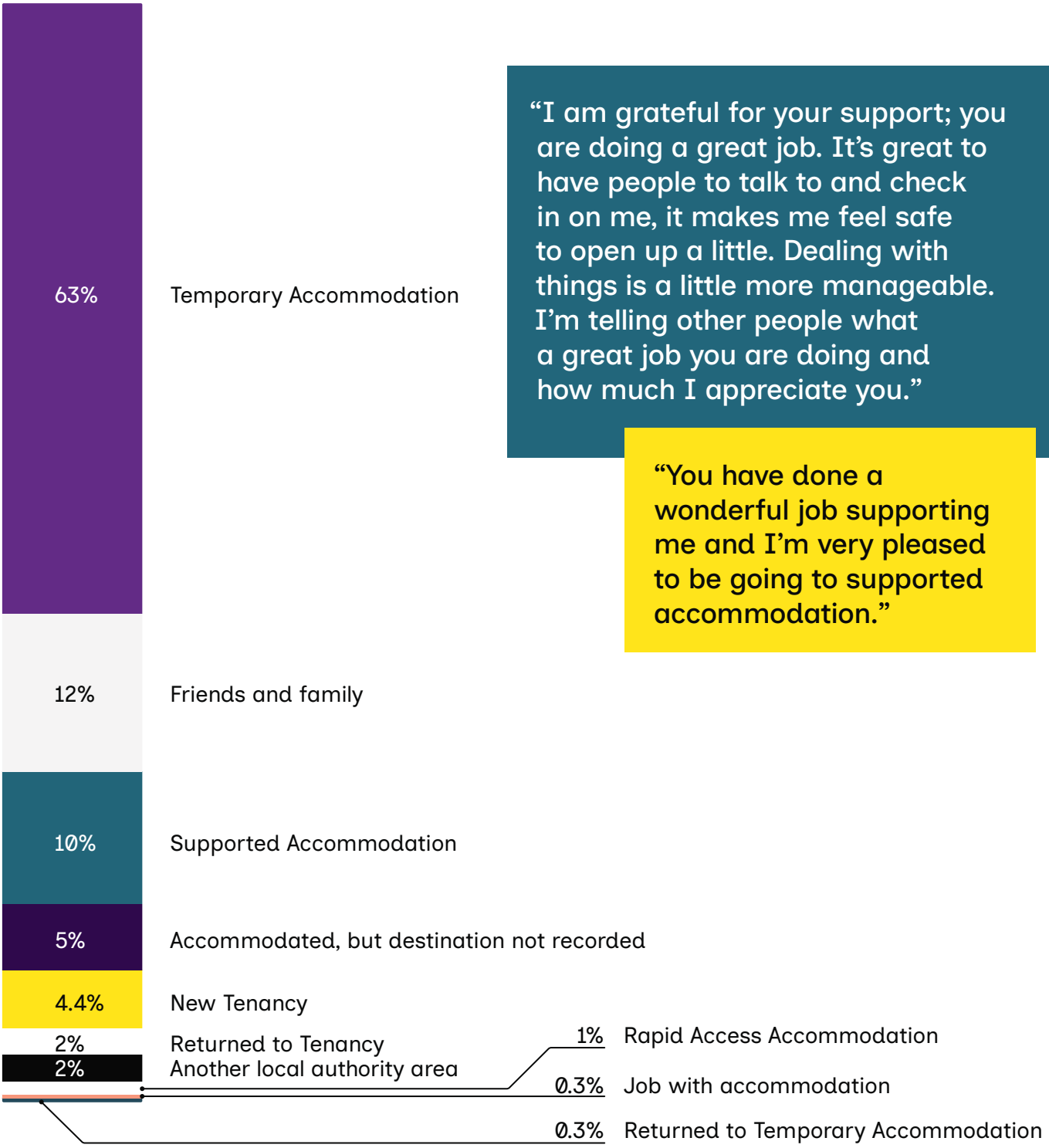
"What you are doing here is amazing.
I don't know what I would do without you."

Outcomes

99% Positive

It is not always possible for us to know where people move on to, however, we do work hard to find out as much information as possible about where people have gone after they leave the Welcome Centre.

This season, 99% of our known outcomes are positive. The breakdown is as follows:



> "I am grateful for your support; you are doing a great job. It's great to have people to talk to and check in on me, it makes me feel safe to open up a little. Dealing with things is a little more manageable. I'm telling other people what a great job you are doing and how much I appreciate you."

> "You have done a wonderful job supporting me and I'm very pleased to be going to supported accommodation."

"I am so grateful for what you do to help me. Giving me a place to stay during this difficult time in my life... for simply asking how I am on a day-to-day basis."

Sara's* story

Sara arrived in the UK after fleeing her homeland due to fear of the government there. She arrived with nothing, alone and frightened. After a few months of moving around the country, Sara came to Edinburgh and was referred to the Welcome Centre by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Sara said, "*Initially, I was so overwhelmed. Thankfully, I was so well supported. I was very surprised at the help I received. At the Welcome Centre I had food, a warm bed and a clean room – the food was truly a very big help.*"

"I felt really safe, otherwise, I would have been on the streets."

"Knowing that the staff were checking on my welfare regularly made me feel safe. For someone like me who is here alone, having staff that I can talk to and guide me has been so helpful.

Bethany Christian Trust staff gave me a lot of hope for the future – they encouraged and supported me to get a flat. I am moving into a council tenancy – I am looking forward to moving there.

I have been supported with finding everything I need to make it my first home. I now plan to go to university, and I hope to eventually open my own kindergarten."

*Name changed and guest identity is not connected to featured picture

Challenges

HMO licensing and housing crisis

Since 2020, Bethany Christian Trust, the CEC and the Haymarket Hub Hotel have partnered to deliver the Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre. The Welcome Centre has 65 rooms in the hotel, and a CEC-run temporary accommodation service occupies the rest of the building.

Early this season, a decision was made by the CEC to stop using hotel premises for temporary accommodation where the provider did not have an HMO licence for that site, as their continued use was deemed to be illegal. This change to the application of HMO licensing regulations in Edinburgh created the potential for service interruption just as winter set in. However, the Haymarket Hub Hotel was granted an exemption by the City of Edinburgh Council, resulting in the hotel continuing to provide emergency accommodation for four months beyond the original 30th November 2024 deadline. This ensured that the Welcome Centre could operate right through the coldest period of the year, offering 26 weeks of continuous emergency accommodation – just four weeks short of a full season.

The Haymarket Hub Hotel prepared to return to its original role as a tourist hotel, closing on 31st March for refurbishment before reopening to the public. Bethany extends heartfelt thanks to the Haymarket Hub Hotel, whose remarkable partnership, enabled by the City of Edinburgh Council, has facilitated this life-saving service across five winter seasons. The Welcome Centre gradually reduced use of its 65 rooms over the month of March and supported every guest on to alternative accommodation.

As no other facility became available to house the Welcome Centre for the month of April, two temporary adapted services were created: a daytime drop-in and warm space which operated 5-days-a-week at Barclay Viewforth Church in Bruntsfield; and an evening meal, 7-nights-a-week at Gorgie Parish Church. Although we couldn't provide a place for people to sleep, we were able to connect people with our partner agencies, support people in finding suitable alternative accommodation and link them in with any other relevant support.

This change in use of unlicensed temporary accommodation not only posed a challenge to the Welcome Centre directly, but it also had a knock-on effect on the wider network of homelessness services across the city. Edinburgh declared a housing emergency in November 2023 and it is with this backdrop that the reduction in the number of temporary accommodation beds from 1st December 2024 took place.

Bethany Christian Trust is in support of making sure temporary accommodation is safe and meets necessary standards for the welfare of those who stay. However, the speed at which this decision was implemented was challenging for those working in homelessness services, and of course those experiencing homelessness. These changes resulted in extra presentations to the Welcome Centre and more people being turned away due to capacity constraints. The data captured this season shows 227 people being turned away, but there are dates when no response was recorded to this question on the report form. Although staff were accustomed to recording these figures at the door, there were additional people turned away over the phone.

Refugees

In recent years, we have seen an upsurge of refugees and asylum seekers: individuals who are fleeing war and violence and looking for safety in Scotland.

When a person is seeking asylum in the UK, they may be accommodated by the Home Office. Once their application is processed, they have a short window of time before they must leave that accommodation, find work and live independently. Many neither speak nor understand English, which is a major setback to progressing their employment search and settlement in this country. A new refugee might find themselves on the streets with no money and nowhere to go. At the Welcome Centre, we can start to formulate a strategy to help. This could be language classes through ESOL, or contacting The Welcoming and Salaam, who both have inroads into cultural communities and can help to support these individuals to settle into their new lives. We endeavour to look after these individuals until a resolution to their situation is found.

“I’m deeply appreciative for the help in my moment of crisis.”

Drug deaths

Scotland continues to have the highest rate of drug deaths in Europe. Opioids still contribute to most deaths, with benzodiazepines a close second. The evidence of a link between drug use and homelessness is very strong. Given the thousands of vulnerable people accommodated and supported at the Welcome Centre over the years, we continue to hear news of familiar names of past guests who have sadly passed away due to drug overdose.

The Welcome Centre has procedures in place to help support people trapped in substance misuse:

- Staff are trained in harm reduction, understanding the signs of drug use and the risks, and administering Naloxone in an emergency
- Staff conduct five welfare checks a day on guests in their rooms. This allows us to spot the signs of drug use and take appropriate action in supporting our guests and keeping everyone safe
- In-reach to the Welcome Centre from visiting partner Change Grow Live for addiction and alcohol support
- We participate in weekly multi-agency meetings to highlight individuals of concern from alcohol or drug use
- Referral route to Bridge to Freedom – a Bethany-run, community-based recovery group
- Offering residential recovery as an option to guests through referrals to various rehabilitation and recovery centres across the UK, including Bethany services Anne Hope House (for women) and Bethany Christian Centre (for men)

Volunteering

This season the Welcome Centre continued to offer a two-course, hot, evening meal to our guests, and this was made possible by the faithful commitment of our wonderful volunteers, without whom the service would be bereft.

This year, we had the privilege of working alongside forty church teams, two corporate teams and many individuals who gave their time and resources to serve our guests, some at a moment's notice. Together, they cooked more than 10,450 hot meals over 209 nights and made a massive 6,270 lunchtime sandwiches.

We are indebted to our volunteers who help the Welcome Centre in this way. Thank you.

We would also like to mention the generosity of Pizza Geeks on Dalry Road, who freely offered to help us with donated pizzas when our catering teams were unavailable. Another huge thanks.

"Thank you to all the team for all you have done for me, I feel positive about moving on to my new accommodation."

Jakub's* story

Jakub came to Scotland to start a new life with a woman he had met online. Initially, things went well—he found a job and spent four years in a relationship. However, his circumstances took a turn for the worse when, just two weeks into his job, he experienced a seizure and had to leave work, becoming unemployed. After the breakup with his partner, Jakub found himself in a difficult situation and had to leave his ex-partner's accommodation. Jakub presented to the City of Edinburgh Council (the CEC), but there was no accommodation available. Thankfully, the CEC referred Jakub to the Welcome Centre.

The start of Jakub's stay at the Welcome Centre was challenging. Jakub felt lost and isolated. However, with the support of the Welcome Centre staff, he began to rebuild his life.

He received significant help from the staff who assisted him with his Universal Credit application and job search. Jakub emphasises that throughout his stay he felt supported; he could always count on a conversation and support whenever he needed it.

From the Welcome Centre, Jakub was referred to Bethany House where he was able to continue receiving great support and making positive changes in his life.

Today, Jakub looks to the future with optimism, believing that anything is possible with perseverance and patience. As he puts it, "Everything is heading in the right direction."

*Name changed and guest identity is not connected to featured picture

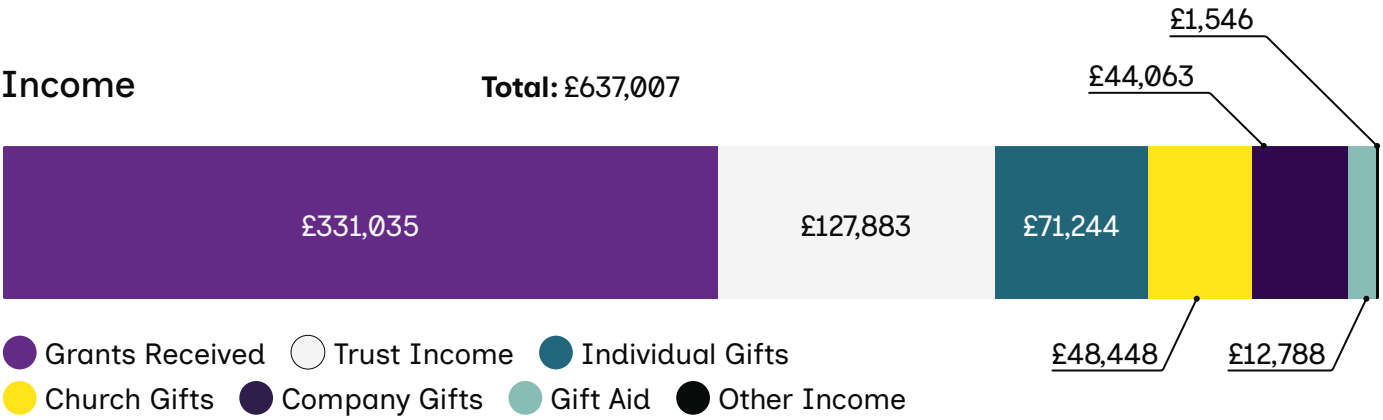
Finance

2024-25 Season

The figures below cover the period between June 2024 - May 2025:

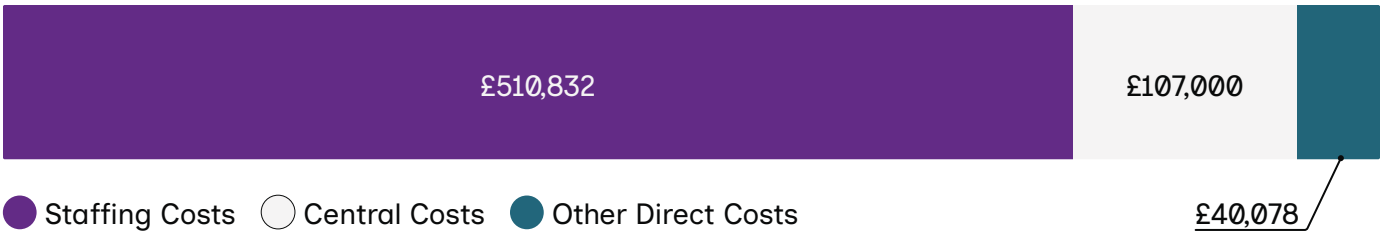
Income

Total: £637,007



Expenditure

Total: £657,910



We are thankful for the generous grants, trust funding and corporate donations that we have received over the 2024-25 financial year which have enabled the work of the Welcome Centre this season:

Challenge Trust
City of Edinburgh Council
Cruden Foundation Ltd.
Edinburgh Manchester City Supporters Club
Ferrier Pumps Ltd
Influence
Shepha Properties
Stewardship Wealth
The Hinshelwood Gibson Trust
The Lady Marian Gibson Trust
The Mackie Foundation
The Meikle Foundation
The Reed Foundation
The Scottish Government
The Social Bite Fund
The Stafford Trust
The Reed Foundation
TOR Christian Foundation
William Purves Funeral Directors
Wilson Family Trust

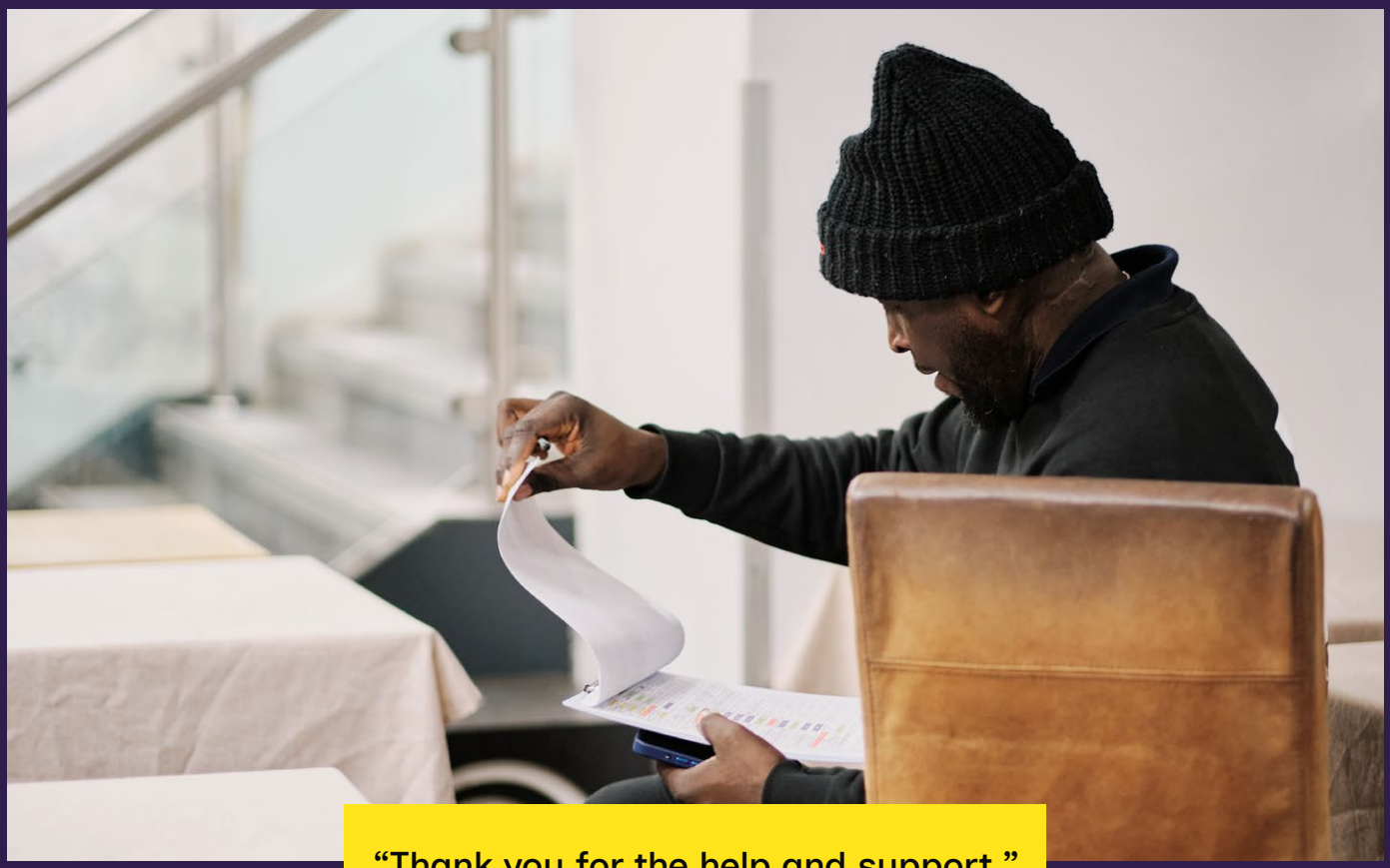
We would also like to thank the many churches and communities across Scotland who support us financially. Due to the scale of your support we cannot acknowledge every generous act, but each and every one is greatly appreciated.

Gifts in Kind

Thank you to the countless number of people and organisations who gave of their time and money to donate to the Welcome Centre gifts of food, clothing, sleeping bags, toiletries and Christmas gifts. We could not do without them.

A huge thank you to...

Askbio
Barclay Viewforth Church
Beigebell
Bellevue Chapel
Capital City Church International
Central Church
Centrepoint Church Bathgate
Chalmers Church Edinburgh
Charlotte Chapel
Christ Church Britwell
Christ Church Morningside
Church of the Sacred Heart
City Gates Baptist Church
City on a Hill
Craiglockhart Church
Cumbernauld Free Church
Dentons
Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation
Edinburgh New Town Church
Give Today
Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse
Grace Church
Greenbank Parish Church
Hillsong Edinburgh
Holyrood Evangelical Church
Hope! Church
Hope City Church
Joseph Accommodations Ltd
King's Church Edinburgh
Leith Baptist
Liberton Kirk
Liberty Church, Dunfermline
Maddiston Evangelical Church
Pizza Geeks
Social Bite
South Edinburgh Cluster
St Anne's Church
St Giles Neighbourhood Group
St John the Evangelist
St John's & St Mary Magdalene's
St Margaret's Church
St Mark's, Portobello
St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral
St Michael's Linlithgow
St Mungo's, Balerno
St Ninian's, Marionville
Trinity Community Church Penicuik



"Thank you for the help and support."

Partnership working

Link Worker

Since 2019, the Welcome Centre has hugely benefited from the Link Worker role. This position is funded by the CEC and works across the Welcome Centre and Rapid Access Accommodations. The Link Worker can provide in-person pre-homelessness assessments. They have access to council information on available accommodation and can refer individuals to somewhere suitable. This work can be completed onsite at the Welcome Centre and is a help not only to the service and the CEC, but more importantly to the guests. The Link Worker role removes travel time to and from council offices and means guests can access council services from their accommodation, thereby reducing barriers for our guests. The role also supports individuals by helping them engage with other support services including adult Social Work, NHS services and follow-on support.

Since 2023, the Link Worker role was filled by Rebecca Haley. Rebecca has been a constant asset in her abilities and attitude to serving guests, fellow staff and partner agencies. Rebecca was offered and accepted a new role working at another department within the CEC. We would like to thank Rebecca for her outstanding service to Bethany Christian Trust.

Bethany has worked very closely with the CEC in making the Link Worker model a success over the last 5 years, initially developed through Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and related funding. We understand that the model will continue as an in-house service within the CEC and look forward to the continued engagement from this service with the Welcome Centre in the upcoming season. The Link Worker provision is paramount to the successful moves on for guests at the Welcome Centre.

"This year has involved working within and between the Welcome Centre and Edinburgh's three Rapid Access Accommodations. I have enjoyed working towards positive move-on options, specifically for those with multiple complex needs, into a range of supported accommodations across the city. This included working with service users, accommodation staff, colleagues at the CEC, and a wide range of partner support organisations. As with last year, I am grateful for the teams I have served alongside, and the way that God has worked in each situation – providing both a source of strength and hope in day-to-day work."

– Rebecca Haley
Link Worker

"I feel so much better after getting a hot shower and I really appreciate the little things you do for us."

Partnerships

Partnership working is one of the strengths of the Welcome Centre. It is through the help and expertise of our partners that we can address the myriad issues that people present with daily.

Over the years of operation, we have seen the diversity of our guests increase, as well as the number of nationalities represented. Many come from extreme situations and have complex needs. We would not be able to fulfil our remit of a holistic approach to each person without our partners. There are many ways that we engage with our partner organisations: fortnightly meetings with staff to discuss specific guests, onsite drop-ins and appointments, and via partner-specific referral routes.

The benefits of providing support in this way:

- Guests can access a service they might not have linked with otherwise
- Bringing the service to our guests removes various barriers to access
- Informal drop-ins by partners make them familiar to our guests and therefore makes formal consultations in the future less daunting

A huge thank you to all those who work alongside us and are committed to offering their specialised help, whether it be legal, financial, housing or addiction advice, physical and mental health support, English classes, or care for those who have been exploited. We are grateful for your support. This report includes two contributions that highlight only some of the amazing impact made through our multidisciplinary partnerships. Every partner plays a vital role in this life-saving work.

"Bethany Christian Trust, via the Welcome Centre and the Haymarket Hub, have been excellent working partners over the last nine months, referring young people to me who wish for support finding positive destinations, whilst also receiving vital assistance from staff at Bethany/Hub for their housing and living needs.

It has been a mutually beneficial partnership that has not only seen clients referred to me get the employability support they desire but also provided them with hope for their future. Their staff are knowledgeable, friendly, and welcoming, as well as being a very helpful conduit for the service I provide to clients.

This is a partnership that will only continue to strengthen moving forward."

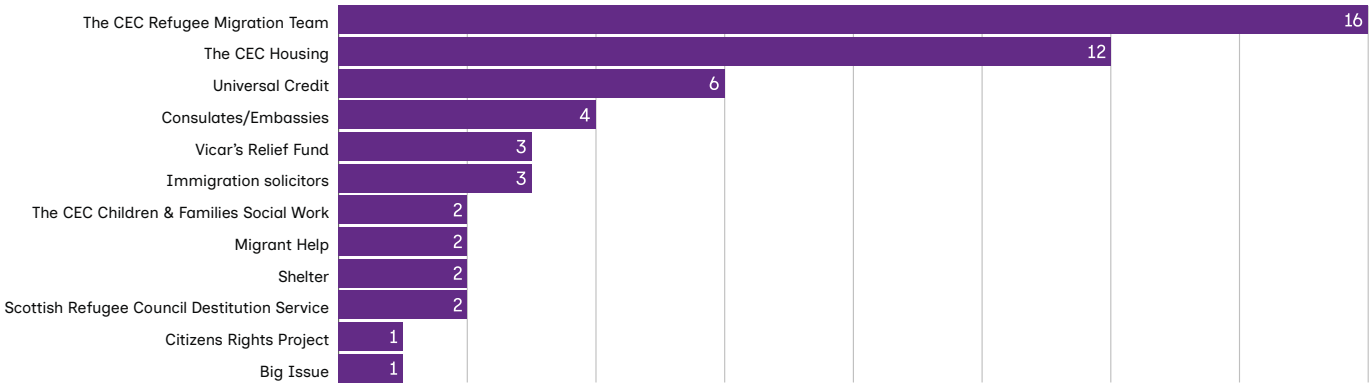
– Greig Stephen
Four Square's Springboard

"Thank you for all that you have done to support me over the season and for supporting me into a Bethany Flat. I've been homeless for 5 years now and I'm very grateful."

Work with non-UK nationals

Two caseworkers from Simon Community Scotland's Preventing Migrant Homelessness team attended the Welcome Centre on a weekly basis to work with non-UK nationals whose immigration status was creating a barrier for them accessing services. They were accompanied by the anti-trafficking worker from Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS).

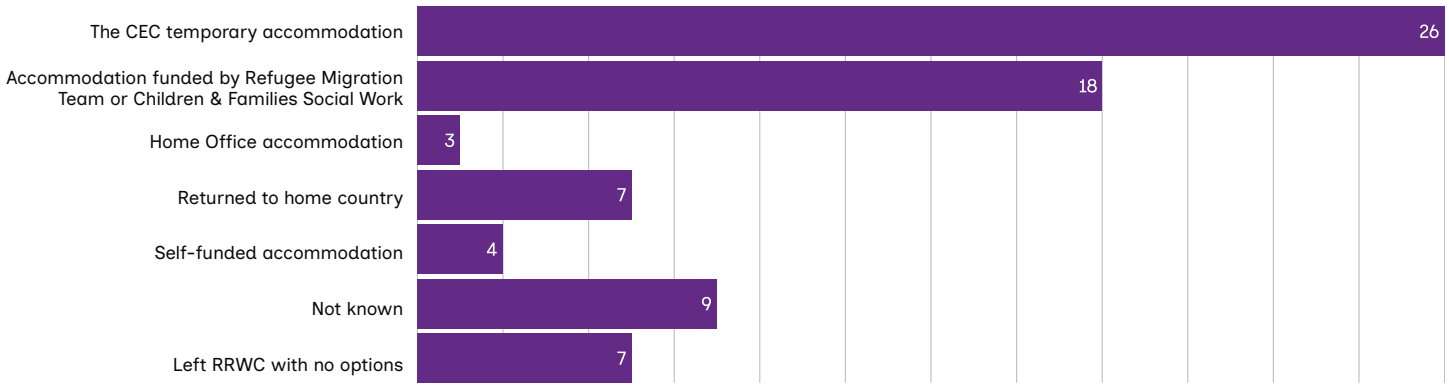
The caseworkers supported 74 individuals a total of 227 times over the course of the season. They were able to provide individuals with advice and support, making 54 referrals to the following organisations:



The caseworkers also carried out accredited IAA level 1 (limited to EUSS) casework with 25 individuals: providing application support to 11 individuals, post-application support to 10 individuals and one-off advice to 4 individuals.

They also provided specialist anti-trafficking support to clients who had experienced human trafficking, as well as preventative work for clients at risk of trafficking or exploitation. The team also supported a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, primarily from Vietnam, to access the correct age-appropriate support.

The 74 individuals moved on from the Welcome Centre to the following destinations:



78% of individuals supported by caseworkers had a positive move-on from the Welcome Centre.

George's* story

A partnership story

During the Welcome Centre season, our staff engage daily with multiple partner agencies. We worked closely with each agency with a shared goal of supporting the most vulnerable people in their moments of homelessness crisis.

On one such occasion we were contacted by our partners at Streetwork, Simon Community Scotland. Staff there were referring a male who was at risk of sleeping rough on the cold winter streets of Edinburgh, an issue exacerbated by a chest infection he was suffering from. Shortly after the call, George arrived at the Welcome Centre. He was cold, hungry and physically struggling.

Staff immediately welcomed George into the warmth and offered him a hot drink. During the sign-in process, George was emotional with relief: he would not have to spend that night outside.

Fortunately, he only needed to stay one night in the Welcome Centre as he had follow-on accommodation to move into the next day. The existence of the Welcome Centre meant George did not have to sleep rough, saving him from further risk.

After George had moved on, we received an email from George's support worker at Streetwork, thanking the Welcome Centre staff for the safe accommodation, warm room, food, and the loving care he was shown during his stay with us.

"Bethany have changed my life and helped me to become a 'respectable' man. I'm now able to get in touch with my family and remain clean and sober despite life's many difficult challenges. I'm grateful for all you have done for me as an organisation."

*Name changed and guest identity is not connected to featured picture

Section 08 cont.

List of partners

Advocard: Supporting with advocacy

Anne Hope House: Recovery focused, therapeutic accommodation for women

Barber: Providing free haircuts

Bethany Christian Centre: Abstinence based residential recovery programme for men

Bethany House: Emergency resettlement accommodation

Bridge to Freedom: Recovery worker was available to engage with anyone seeking to explore recovery

Change Grow Live: Offering one-to-one and group support in addiction recovery, planning and accessing harm reduction information

Christians Against Poverty: Supporting people out of debt

Civil Legal Assistance Office: Legal advice and information on housing rights

Crisis: Housing and employment advice, life coaches, courses and helping people move in to private lets

Connect to Community: Mentoring relationships for men and women leaving prison to reintegrate into their local community and achieve their goals

Cyrenians Outreach: Assisting guests with support tasks and accompanying them to appointments

Cyrenians Hospital In-reach: Referring directly from the hospital and supporting those who have gone into hospital from the Welcome Centre

Dental Nurses: Monthly oral health drop-in provided by Outreach Dental Nurses

Dogs Trust: Providing vet support, food and other essential items

ESOL classes: Directing referrals from RRWC to English classes

EUSS Drop-In: Supporting guests with all aspects of EUSS applications

Four Square: One-to-one visiting housing support to help with health, unemployment, rent arrears, benefits or any other issues preventing people from managing their housing situation

Four Square's Springboard: Specifically aimed at under 25s, offering one-to-one support for education advice, housing advice and support to find work

Harm Reduction Nurses: Advising guests who are actively using substances and test for blood-borne viruses

Junction 42: One-to-one befriending and mentoring for prisoners and prison leavers

Migrant Help: Supporting asylum seekers and providing training for staff

Only a Pavement Away: Providing employment advice and support back into work, specifically the hospitality industry

Police Scotland: Bringing people in need of accommodation to the RRWC, while assisting in emergency situations and welfare concerns

Right There: One-to-one visiting housing support for any issues preventing people from managing their housing situation

Rock Trust: Offering training and support for anyone aged between 16 and 25

Salaam: Edinburgh City Mission supporting New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers

Scottish Refugee Council: Supporting those who are refugees and asylum seekers

Salvation Army: Niddry Street Drop-in and Rapid Access Accommodation

Shelter Scotland: Supporting guests with legal issues with their accommodation and homelessness

Social Bite Employment Programme: Supporting people into work

Street Pastors: Supporting and bringing people found in the city centre to the Welcome Centre

Street Pharmacist: Medical and general support interventions

Street Soccer: Supporting positive change through football

Streetreads: Providing a library of books for the guests, including foreign language books

Streetwork: Supporting guests into accommodation and in attending other services

Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS): Supporting guests who have been exploited

The Access Place: Providing mental health outreach and housing officers

The Advice Shop: Supporting guests with benefits, debt and income maximisation

The Welcoming: Supporting New Scots to transition to life in Scotland

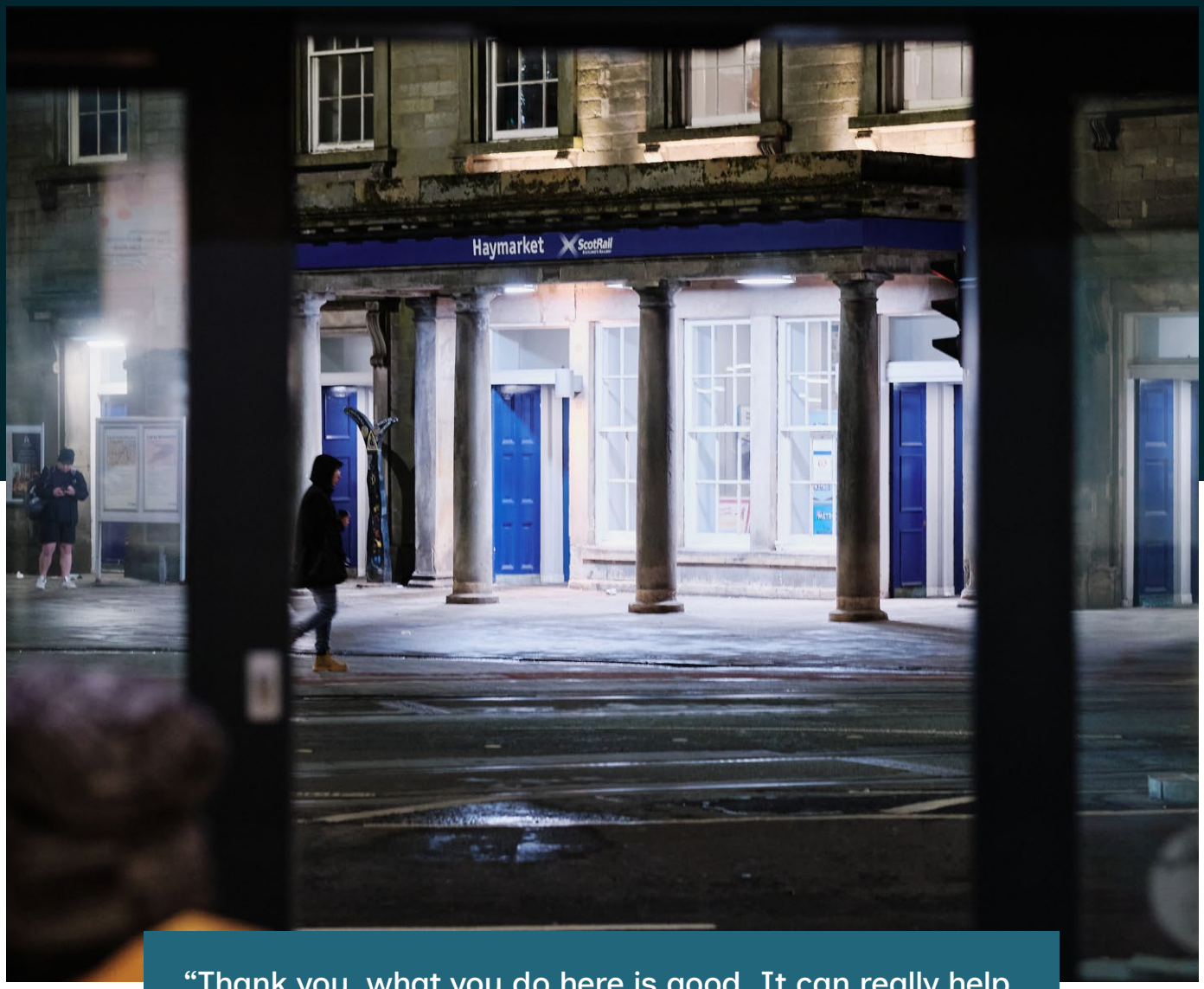
Turning Point: Supporting individuals experiencing substance misuse

Service changes since April 2025

The need to adapt

With the Haymarket Hub Hotel closing its doors at the end of March, Bethany Christian Trust, with the support of the Scottish Government and the CEC, operated two new services over the month of April. It was disappointing not to have overnight accommodation for this final month of the Welcome Centre season, but we are thankful for how everything came together to allow us to continue to support our guests, to employ our staff team and to contribute to the city-wide effort to tackle homelessness in Edinburgh.

A huge thank you to Barclay Viewforth Church and Gorgie Parish Church for the use of their buildings during this time.



"Thank you, what you do here is good. It can really help people stay on track."

Drop-in

Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm,
Barclay Viewforth Church

This drop-in was open to anyone looking for community, care and support. Our staff continued to help every individual who presented at the church.

Our Link Worker, Rebecca, and many of our partners attended to give tailored support to anyone who needed it. We supported three individuals out of rough sleeping and into supported accommodation during this time.

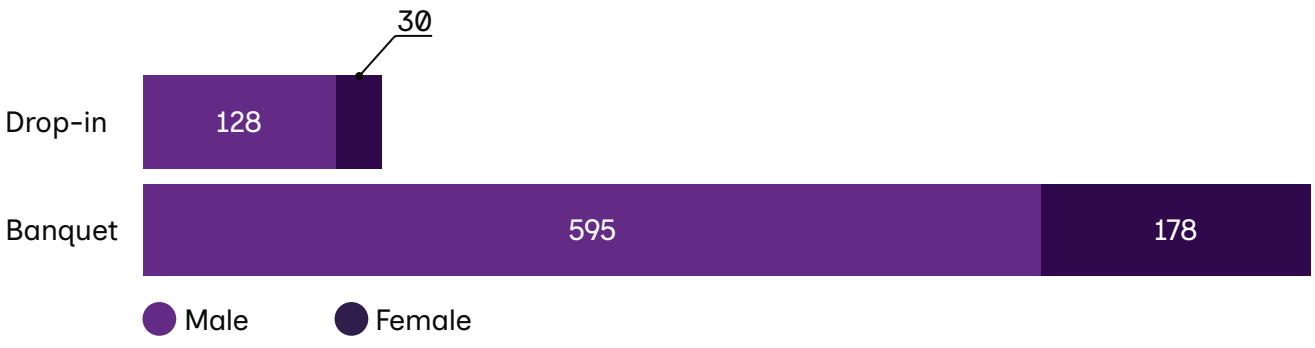
Evening Banquet

Every evening, 7.30pm–10.30pm,
Gorgie Parish Church

Each evening, our dedicated volunteer teams prepared a two-course dinner. Doors would open at 7.30pm, guests would be welcomed by our staff and at 8pm the evening meal would be served to everyone at their tables. Each night, staff were on hand to love and care for every guest, creating a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

Over the month, several really encouraging conversations were held between staff and guests. Stories of shared struggles, positive outcomes, recovery and real changes in lives were exchanged. On the last night, guests at the evening meal applauded the volunteers and staff for the service, hard work and community that had been offered.

Numbers of guests visiting these new services:



"What you are doing here is amazing, I don't know what I would do without you. Keeping you in my prayers. Thank you for all you've done for me."

Bethany Banquets will continue, as usual, bridging the gap over the summer months. These take place each month, on the last Wednesday in May, June, July and August and are open to anyone who is looking for a quality, nutritious 3-course dinner.

The Banquet is operated in safe and comfortable surroundings. Guests are welcomed by experienced staff who want to show Christ's love in action, there's good food and often live music.

The summer Bethany Banquets have always been a huge success; this is thanks to the hard work from staff and volunteers.

We also rely on our local churches for venues. Without their support, the Banquets wouldn't be possible.

Thanks guys, this has been brilliant 100%.

To all staff doing the service. Thank you. You have given us a month of richness. The food and the people, you have made our month easier, knowing a nice chair, cuppa and a smile. That goes a long way with you to make someone's day full.

So, thank you from us all.

- Thank You card from guests of the banquet

Conclusions and recommendations

The Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre is the only service of its kind in Scotland. This lifesaving service impacted 618 individuals this season. Without this low-barrier, high-support emergency accommodation, many individuals would have slept rough in the cold winter months. The Welcome Centre model is not just about accommodation; it also offers wraparound support, tailored to the individual, with a strong focus on moving people on to longer-term accommodation. Guests leave the service with more support than when they first arrived. This is thanks to our focus on partnership work.

Everyone who accesses the Welcome Centre has their own story and their own needs. The unique Welcome Centre model allows us to address these needs, one person at a time.

Trends

Every new season brings the Welcome Centre unforeseen challenges. Thanks to the adaptability of our service, staff and visiting partner agencies, we can respond to changing situations.

This year, we saw a rise in the number of people presenting who have come to the UK and have had to navigate the asylum process. Those who have been granted asylum do not jump the queue for accommodation, but must present to localities across the UK and request accommodation the same way as everyone else who is roofless. However, with the lack of accommodation available, some are turned away, and with no support network in place, are forced to rough sleep. Thankfully, the Welcome Centre is available and has prevented many from having to sleep rough.

As well as those who have come through the asylum process and are now eligible for housing support, there are those who are not entitled to any support. Again, due to the Welcome Centre's low-bar access, we can accommodate these individuals and work with them to find suitable accommodation, in partnership with agencies that focus on immigration. Many of our guests who did not have entitlement when they first presented are now eligible for support.

It was another busy season for the Welcome Centre, as expected, due to the ongoing housing emergency that Edinburgh is experiencing. Compounding this, the unanticipated change in approach in relation to HMO licensing requirements for temporary accommodation in hotels and guest houses resulted in extra presentations to the Welcome Centre. The data captured this season shows 227 people turned away due to capacity constraints, but it is likely the actual number is greater than this due to discrepancies with the recording of the data.

The average length of stay this season was 18 nights, up from 17 the winter before.W shorter season (180 nights instead of 210) it is possible this would have increased before the end of the planned 30-week season. This increase is likely due to a combination of factors: the housing emergency, the reduction of temporary accommodation due to the HMO licensing decision and the increase in the number of migrants, many of whom had more complex situations that took longer to resolve.

Our commitment

The Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre is a lifesaving service available to people who are without a place to call home. As long as there are people in need of this service, Bethany Christian Trust will do all it can to deliver help and support to those who are in crisis. We will continue to adapt our service to better support those at risk of rough sleeping in the city of Edinburgh.

Recommendations

We recommend the continuation of the current Welcome Centre model, operating 24/7 over at least 30 weeks of the year, including the winter months. We believe this model makes the biggest impact in saving lives and diverting countless numbers of people from having to sleep outside in the cold Scottish weather. Providing accommodation to individuals or couples with their own ensuite rooms, the Welcome Centre will continue to offer respect, dignity, warmth, support, food, community, and hope.

The Welcome Centre will work towards supporting each person into a better future, with long-term stable accommodation and follow-on support should they need it. This coming winter, we anticipate continued challenges due to the lack of available accommodation in Edinburgh for homeless households. We know that the Scottish Government, the CEC and third sector partners are working day and night to provide solutions for people experiencing homelessness.

With the Haymarket Hub Hotel returning to be a commercial hotel, the Welcome Centre is in need of a new venue for next season. Discussions are ongoing with the CEC and the Scottish Government to ensure that a suitable building can be identified for the service to operate from October 2025.

With preparation time needed for the start of a new season, time is limited to secure and prepare suitable accommodation. We are very grateful for support from the Scottish Government and the CEC, from officers and elected officials. It is preferable that the venue is located in or near the city centre, has at least fifty ensuite rooms, a commercial kitchen, a communal space for guests to socialise and meet with staff as well as meeting rooms and space for storage.

It is paramount that the service continues to have a Link Worker embedded within it. This role is vital in linking people in with available CEC accommodation and in removing barriers that our guests experience when needing to access the council on a daily basis to seek accommodation.

"The Care Shelter in its original form has a long history of adapting to the challenges of a changing landscape in supporting and sheltering vulnerable and homeless people, and the Welcome Centre has followed a similar path over the last five years, adapting and developing to meet the needs and circumstances of more people in crisis. Bethany Christian Trust is working with the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government to plan suitable accommodation from which to again operate the Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre from October 2025, on our usual season start date. The model is established and strongly supported by statutory and voluntary sector partners with whom we work together in diverting people from potentially rough sleeping circumstances into improved accommodation outcomes.

We are deeply grateful to the Welcome Centre staff for all their love and service, to the church teams who continue to provide and prepare two-course hot meals, to our supporters who champion the plight of the people we serve, to major donors and trusts who further enable this work, to our charity partners for collaborating with us, and to local and national government for their grant funding and partnership.

Bethany strives to show Christian love in action, seeking to restore dignity through care and compassion in the midst of deep brokenness and displaced lives. Thank you sincerely for all your support."

– Alasdair Bennett
Chief Executive

Thank you

Ending homelessness, one person at a time

The letter below was sent by a guest* who stayed at the Welcome Centre last season:

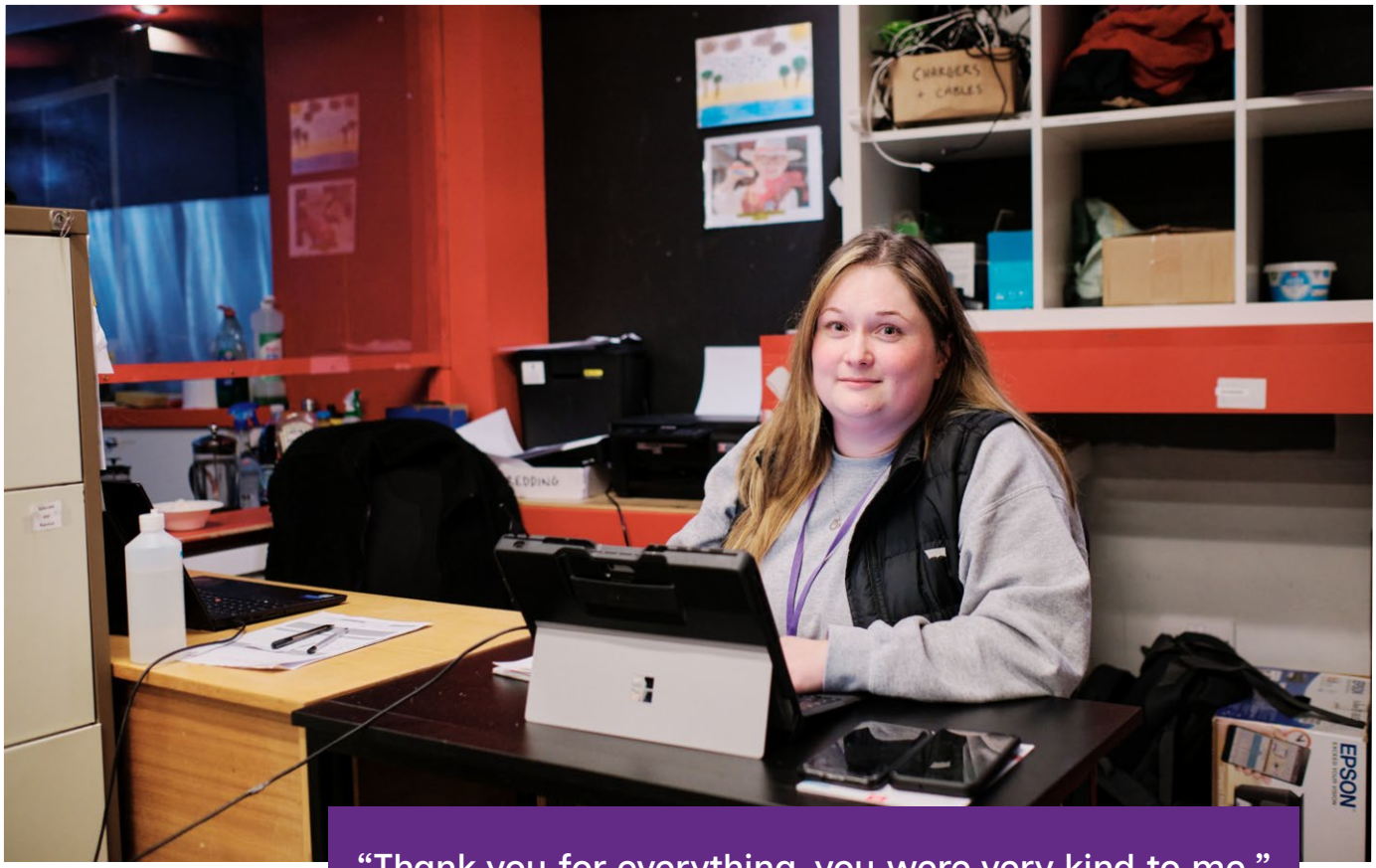
"I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for the incredible support and kindness I received during my recent stay at the Haymarket Hub Hotel. I have now moved on to a private rental. Thanks to your generosity, I was able to find a sense of stability during a difficult time, and I will be forever grateful for how welcomed and supported I felt.

I was greeted warmly on my first day. The staff listened to my story and provided me with the encouragement I needed. I'm deeply appreciative of everyone who brought us food and hot meals and contributed to the warmth of this community. You were all there when I needed it most, and I will carry each of you in my heart as I move on. I feel fortunate to have found accommodation that works for me.

Thank you once again for everything. Your support made all the difference, and I will never forget it."

"Thank you once again for everything. Your support made all the difference, and I will never forget it."

*Guest identity is not connected to featured pictures



"Thank you for everything, you were very kind to me."

Acknowledgements

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Facebook - Bethany Christian Trust
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