Lewisham homeless shelter wins government grant to open year-round

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Lewisham homeless shelter wins government grant to open year-round

The night shelter at the 999 Club will open continuously until at least next Spring after securing government funding.

The 999 Club will receive 191,000 in funding from the government's Rough sleepers' Initiative (RSI), which will pay for the running costs of its emergency shelter until 31 March 2020.

The charity runs the only year-round night shelter for homeless people in the London borough of Lewisham, and this is the first time in its 27-year history that it has been able to open its shelter doors continuously for a year.

To ensure the night shelter can stay open beyond next March, the 999 Club plans to launch a fundraising campaign.

Tim Fallon, Chief Executive of the 999 Club, said: "For the first time, the 999 Club's shelter can open seven days-a-week through the year, providing people with safe, emergency respite from the street while also supporting them to access the right services to transform their lives.

"To meet local need, we would like to keep the year-round night shelter open beyond next Spring and are already working to secure new funds to make this possible.

"We are grateful to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; to Lewisham Council for making the application and to the support of local partner organisations."

Who the night shelter works with

Everyone who comes to the 999 Club's night shelter receives a free dinner and breakfast, access to showers and clothes washing services. At the Gateway day centre, expert staff provide support in benefits' advice and help to find permanent accommodation, while healthcare is provided in partnership with Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group and the South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust (SLAM).

This has enabled people including Tasia and Lloyd, to find and move on to housing. After two periods in the Night Shelter, Tasia has moved into a flat and now volunteers with the 999 Club.

Lloyd, who moved into accommodation earlier this month after three months in the Night Shelter, said: "If it wasn't for the Night Shelter, I would be on the streets. The staff and volunteers there are fantastic at helping people in need of support, and it [the shelter] is a major stepping stone to getting in to housing. The shelter is a good place to have – it's a safe place to stay. We need more shelters like it."

It costs £27 for one person to stay in the Night Shelter for one night, receiving the necessary support to help turn around their lives in addition to the emergency accommodation.

During Winter 2018 (24 September until 10 March), 112 people stayed at the 999 Club's Night Shelter. Some 88 of those were men, and 24 women. They stayed on average more than 28 days before finding suitable accommodation to move on to.

Working in partnership with Lewisham Council, the 999 Club's Night Shelter is one of three projects in the borough which will be funded through the RSI for 2019/20.

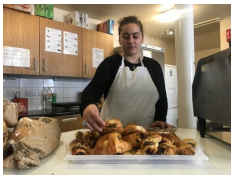
Damien Egan, Mayor of Lewisham, said: "The 999 Club does fantastic work in the community and is helping to transform the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. I am pleased that they will be able to keep their doors open continuously for the first time.

"Across Lewisham and London we are seeing an unacceptable rise in homelessness. This funding, along with the money raised by the Council to support the Mayor's chosen charity, will make a difference to some of the most vulnerable people in our community."

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Last September, the 999 Club was given a £116,000 RSI grant to open its night shelter seven days-a-week for seven months. That funding covered the cost of extra members of staff to work overnight at the shelter, which has enabled the charity to help people with higher support needs. It has also paid for an increase in capacity from 20 to 25 people a night.

Prior to the RSI money, the 999 Club's night shelter had a capacity for 10, later extended to 20, people and opened for 10-week sessions, initially during the Winter as it was able to secure funding. In response to significant demand, the charity added a Spring session in 2018, and also successfully crowdfunded to pay for a summer session from June to September last year.

The number of people recorded as rough sleeping in London rose 18 percent to 8,855 people (April 2018 - March 2019) according to the figures published this month[1] by the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN).

To donate to the 999 Club, visit https://999club.org/make-a-donation/

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

[1] https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports

Photo captions –

1. The 999 Club on Deptford Broadway.
2. The sleeping pods at the Night Shelter.
3. The Night Shelter has capacity for 25 people, 10 in sleeping pods and others on mattresses.
4. Tasia, who stayed in the Night Shelter earlier this year, is now a volunteer at the Gateway.
5. Tim Fallon (999 Club CEO), Damien Egan (Mayor of Lewisham) and Nick (former Night Shelter guest) at the 999 Club.

About the 999 Club

The 999 Club is based in Deptford, in the London borough of Lewisham, and has a 27-year history of working with people who have experienced homelessness. We provide a warm welcome for people who are often ignored, isolated or stigmatised. We empower them to gain the confidence, skills and support needed to transform their lives. www.999Club.org

[1] https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports

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