

## Hope Kitchen Trustees' Report - September 2024

The past year has been another where the service Hope Kitchen provides has been shown to be much needed and much appreciated by our guests.

As ever, guest numbers have varied throughout the year but again we have seen busier sessions in the summer than in the winter. Not surprisingly we have observed that bad weather can restrict the numbers of those coming to us whereas good weather can mean more guests arrive. The lowest attendance in the last year was 8; the highest was 48.

Volunteer numbers also inevitably vary with people leaving us and new people coming. At the time of writing we have 23 volunteers who regularly attend. With 7 volunteers needed each Thursday there are 28 spaces to fill on the rota in a 4 week month and 35 in a 5 week month. Consequently we regularly rely on volunteers to sign up for more than one Thursday in a month. Fortunately many are willing and able to do this and the dedication and commitment of all our lovely volunteers is greatly appreciated.

We also rely on the generosity of members of the public and local organisations and charities in providing our funding. We receive no funding at all from local or national government. We are especially indebted to Wellington Square Baptist Church who continue to allow us to operate from their premises at no cost.

The majority of our spending comprises purchase of the weekly food and drink and the recyclable/compostable containers they are served in. Every week we offer our guests a choice of a take-away hot meal of either soup or pasta (choice of two in each case) and a choice of freshly-made filled rolls. A vegetarian option is available. We also offer a hot drink of tea, coffee or hot chocolate or a cold drink of squash, and a small bag of biscuits.

Some money is spent on the purchase of sleeping bags – an item that our guests often need to ask us for. We try to keep a supply of socks, gloves and warm hats which we purchase and we also receive donations from the public of other items of clothing like warm jumpers, shoes and coats.

Just before Christmas each year we provide a special festive meal for our guests. Last year we bought pizzas, Yule log and chocolate bars.

The other occasional item of expenditure we incur is in supporting people who are moving into temporary accommodation and who are in need of individual household items and furniture like microwave ovens or beds. These requests come to us via organisations like the Brighton Housing Trust who are appealing on behalf of an individual who is living or moving into the Hastings area. Payments are always made to the organisation rather than the individual.

Looking to the future we hope we will be able to continue providing the service we do to the homeless and disadvantaged people of Hastings for as long as there is a need. It is also our privilege to offer them a friendly smile, an encouraging word and any help or advice it is within our ability to provide. By so doing, we hope to show something of the love of Jesus Christ into this part of His world.

Ed Towner