

Tabor House Impact Report 2018/19



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Foreword

We can so easily assume that a project or initiative is working well (or even badly for that matter) but how do we know? It does take a bit of courage to find out by asking everyone involved, record and then publish it. So when we were asked if we would like to have an impact report it was encouraging to hear iShelter staff and management board welcoming it as a great opportunity to evaluate Tabor House. Our thanks for this report go to James Poli, a Birmingham University student who worked with Sharon Fear to compile the report. We would also like to thank the volunteers and staff for their continued hard work for the project.

When we started this project we took out time – two years of consulting statutory and voluntary bodies and looking at other initiatives and considering what we could achieve given our own limitations. We took our time because we wanted to make an impact on a growing problem. One of our conclusions might seem like an obvious one, that the ‘problem’ is actually people living in the worst conditions possible with a life expectancy lower than the poorest nations on our earth. However, those people have strengths and are uniquely gifted. It is heartening to read that the Tabor House ‘strength based approach’ does not see the problem first but each gifted person. It is also gratifying to read that guests, volunteers and partner organisations admire the ethos, family

feel of Tabor House which has been created by guests, staff and volunteers.

The report acknowledges that there have been challenges. It also reports on critical comments that are making us reflect on how we work. We will continue to review our work in the light of what we have read. I would also ask you to read this report. It is honest and honesty is what we so badly need in our politics, church life and charitable work. It can be painful but there is no alternative if we want to bring about positive change. It also speaks of generosity – generosity from many quarters. That too is vital. We thank all who read this for your generosity. When you read this report we are sure you will feel it is time, energy, money well spent.

*“In as much as you did it to the least of these you did it to me”
(Mtt 25:40)*

Father Michael White, Chair of the iShelter Management Committee, February 2020

Aims and objectives of the project?



Tabor House beds.

Tabor House is Birmingham's only permanent night shelter. Based in Digbeth, it opened on the 28th September 2017. The project provides safe and supportive living for those experiencing homelessness but also seeks to benefit its occupants in the long term, not only for the period that they live there. Guests are not permitted to remain indefinitely, but are active in pursuing a new, stable and self-sufficient lifestyle using the help provided by the project.

The team consists of a small group of paid staff, one full time Project Manager and two other part time employees, and a

large group of 106 volunteers who provide personalised support to the guests of the house. There are also mentors who help support the guests during this transitional process.

The project is managed by Father Hudson's' Care on behalf of the iShelter management committee. Father Hudson's Care is a charity founded in 1902 for the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. The iShelter management committee consists of Birmingham philanthropists, the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, Father Hudson's Care, and other local homelessness specialists.



1st year anniversary event, volunteers, guests and staff.

Homelessness in Birmingham

Over the past year, homelessness has been on the rise across the UK and Birmingham has been one of the areas worst affected by the issue. In November 2018, a report into this country-wide problem was released by Shelter, a charity which supports and advises people experiencing homelessness and any person who is having an issue with housing. It found that 320,000 people in the UK were homeless.

Birmingham was ranked as the 3rd highest area outside of London in terms of the number of people who are homeless in the city, behind Luton and Brighton and Hove. One in 73 people in Birmingham are homeless. Their data shows that there are 15,538 homeless people in the city, and that there were approximately 1000 rough sleepers in the West Midlands.

iShelter is committed to ending this upsurge in homelessness in a way that is sustainable, and finds long term, not short term solutions.



Impact on Guests

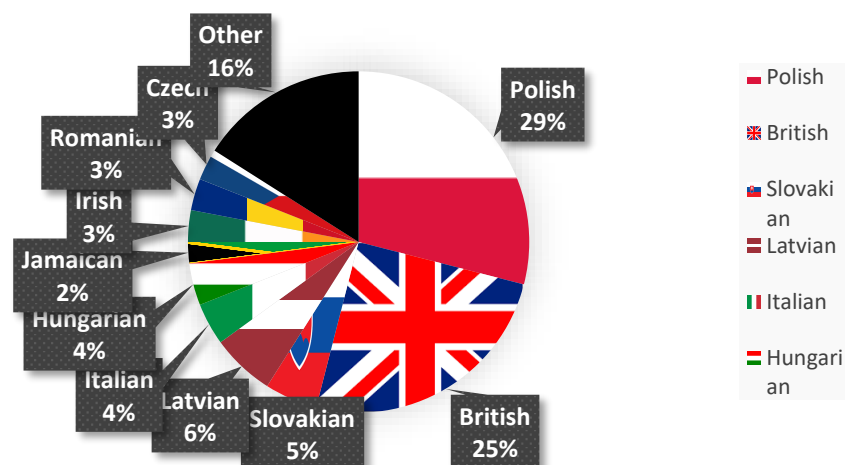
Who are our Guests?

Those who apply to stay at Tabor reflect the diversity of people in England who experience homelessness. They come from various backgrounds, nationalities, age groups and both sexes.

Of the 100 people who have looked at staying with Tabor, 58 have been welcomed into the project. The first guest stayed on the 28th September 2017. Of these 100 people 91 were male and 9 female, with only 4 of these females actually staying at Tabor house. This means that 44% of female applicants joined the project and 59% of male applicants.



The project has welcomed a large number of people of different nationalities. The largest group has been Polish citizens, of whom there have been 29% applicants. The second largest group is comprised of British citizens, 25%, and other large cohorts include citizens from Latvia, Slovakia, Italy and Hungary. Aside from these larger groups there have been many other nationalities, including Irish and Jamaican citizens, but this by no means covers all.

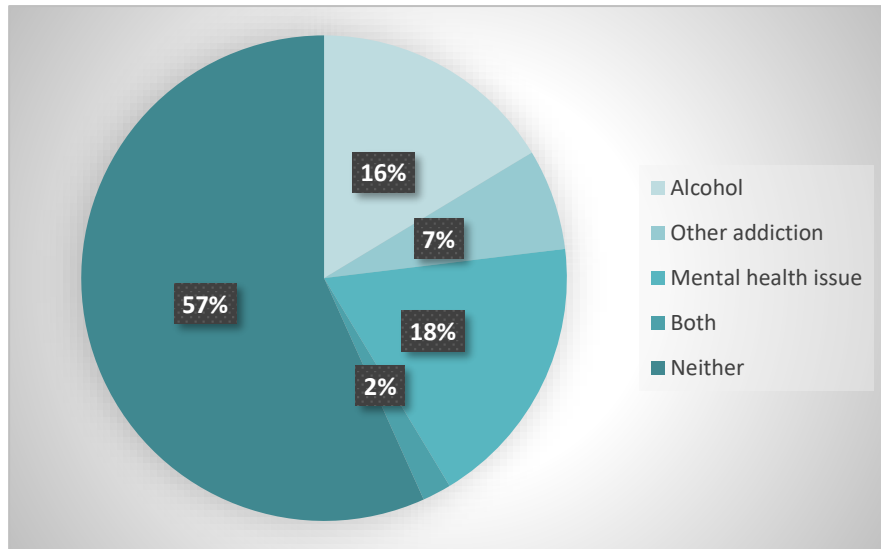


Nationalities chart.

Applicants to Tabor House also come from a considerable number of different age groups, stretching from those being born in the 1950s all the way to the 1990s. The largest number of applicants were born in the 1970s, standing at 31 people. This is followed by the 1980s second with 22, and then the 1960s and 1990s both on 13.

“I love Tabor House, it’s like my family.”

“It’s a safe place to be, I would have remained on the streets.”



Some people experiencing homelessness also deal with poor mental health and issues such as addiction.

Of the 100 people who applied to be part of the project, 19% had a history with mental health problems, but 81% did not. However, almost a quarter (24%) individuals were battling addictions of various kinds. The most common of these was an addiction to alcohol, which made up 70.8% of addictions.

Other types of addictions which guests are dealing with include gambling and different forms of illegal drugs, such as heroin.

Overall, 41% applicants had either an addiction, a mental health issue or both, whereas 59% did not. Many homeless people are suffering on the streets or elsewhere and our project is committed to working with them to enable them to move their lives forward.

“Without Tabor I would have nothing, they gave me an opportunity.”

Addictions and mental health chart.

Only 4 of the 58 people admitted were female, which is 6.9% of all the guests to have stayed at Tabor in total.



Tabor House guest at
Words for Wellbeing.

What impact has Tabor House had on these guests?

Of the 58 people that have stayed at Tabor House, 49 have now moved on from the project. Of these, 26 have moved onto full time employment and their own accommodation, moving back with family or immigrating back to their home country.

In its first 2 years, the project has enabled over half (53%) of guests to move on to employment and their own accommodation. Therefore, the larger proportion of guests who have worked with the project have had positive, life changing experiences which have allowed them to get off the streets.

This is not to say that those who did not attain these outcomes were unsuccessful at Tabor House, they just did not make the changes needed to take full advantage of Tabor House's services.

Activities

Since the start of the project there have been many activities organised for the guests and volunteers, as well as other stakeholders involved with the project. Over the past year the number of such events has increased. In February 2019, members of staff and volunteers received a visit from the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins.

There have also been sponsored walks. In March a number of volunteers and guests hiked in the Malvern Hills, and more recently in August a different group of people, still comprised of volunteers and guests, attempted to climb Snowdon.

Another event which was organised for those involved with the project was the Words for Wellbeing course, which many guests and volunteers took part in. This was a wonderful event where guests were encouraged to write poems and stories about themselves and helping them to bond with each other. The course also helped guests to become more familiar with English. It was a great experience for all involved.



Volunteer and guest reading a poem.



Guests walking in the Malvern Hills.

Mentor approach

Another aspect of Tabor House which sets it apart from other night shelters is its mentor approach. These mentors work with the guests whilst they are on their journey, helping them with their specific needs and goals. Mentoring is about standing alongside someone whilst they navigate a pathway to their aims. On top of this, mentors can continue to support ex-guests of the project even after they leave. Mentors are expected to support the guest they are assigned for a minimum of 3 months.

The mentors at Tabor House are an essential part of the Strength-Based approach that the project takes. This involves the mentor working with their guest to focus on what strengths and abilities they possess so that they can use these to better their lives. From this the mentor will assist their guest in setting goals and targets which will set them on the road to a better and self-sufficient life. The journey towards these goals must be completed by the guest as the mentor is his or her helping hand but is not there to do work for them.



Dogs of guests are accepted at the project.

Volunteers

Who are the volunteers and what are their roles?

There are 106 volunteers currently registered at Tabor House who play such a key role in the success of the project. There are 3 paid members of staff. The project seeks to protect the safety of everyone involved by ensuring volunteers do not work by themselves at any time.

Volunteers are in place to work 3 different shifts on each day of the week:

- A night shift from 10pm to 7am the following day. The first volunteer has a 4 hour sleep from 10:30pm to 2:30am, and then they will swap with the second volunteer who will sleep from 2:30am to 6:30am.
- The morning shift from 7am to 9am. The guests leave the house for the day, from 8:30am to 6:30pm.
- The evening shift from 6pm to 10pm, which welcomes the guests back in.



Winner of the volunteer quiz.



Volunteers and guests at Words for Wellbeing.

Volunteer Survey

A survey was sent out to all volunteers asking them 10 questions about Tabor House and their opinions on various issues concerning the project. The survey was open from the 21st of August 2019 to the 4th of September 2019.

The purpose of the survey was to gather opinions from the volunteers about how the project could improve, what the project has done well and whether they saw it as being able to produce long term success; and even expansion.



Volunteer training event.

Results

1. Where did you find out about Tabor House?

The most common answer to this question was church. Given that Tabor House is a Father Hudson's project, it is heavily linked to various churches, particularly Catholic ones, such as St. Anne's church. 64% volunteers who answered found out about Tabor in this way. The next most popular answer was the internet, such as social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, but also the Father Hudson's website. 18% of the volunteers were in this category. 10% volunteers said they had discovered Tabor through other organisations linked to the project such as Shelter and Father Hudson's Care. Other answers (5%) include family members and other volunteers.

2. Do you think Tabor House is well advertised?

For this question 70% said no, and 30% said yes. Comments included "(not) unless you go to church" and "not many people have hear(d) about it." Many comments noted

similar things, mostly saying that it is not very widely advertised. “Beyond the ‘Catholic’ community people are not aware” was another answer. However, one volunteer voiced the opinion that it does not need to be more widely advertised because all the relevant and referring bodies are aware.

3. How could the project increase its external awareness?

37% volunteers stated that Tabor would benefit from expanding its social media presence, such as on Facebook and Twitter. Many also said that the project should increase its use of local media platforms such as radio. In this department Tabor House is certainly lacking. 18% volunteers said increased church advertisement, but given the previous answers regarding the project’s involvement with multiple churches this does not seem the most necessary area to increase Tabor House’s presence, but this is not to say that it would not be useful or productive. 21% volunteers said that institutions such as schools, universities, job centres, libraries and various others should be used. One volunteer said that many students would like

to volunteer for charities but “never know where to start.” 5% volunteers stated that fundraising events would also be beneficial. However, one volunteer again said that “all relevant agencies already know.”

4. Why did you choose to volunteer at Tabor House?

40% of volunteers said that they chose to work at Tabor House because they wanted to work specifically with the homeless whereas 32% said they did because they wanted to help others in general. Other answers included an interest in the ethos of Tabor house and a need for 3rd sector experience.

5. What do you believe the project does well?

35% of volunteers said that the welcoming, homely and helpful environment that listens and supports guests which Tabor House has is its strong point. 48% volunteers said that the way that Tabor House helps them make positive life changes and changes their lives for the long term is what Tabor House does best. One put it as Tabor House is not

just “purely a roof over their head.” Also, 8% of volunteers stated that the volunteer system in the project is excellent.

6. What do you believe Tabor House could do to improve?

Notable answers included that the project should recruit more volunteers who are able to communicate in European languages, and others said that Tabor House should take in fewer guests who have very poor English. Either way, multiple volunteers believed that language barriers were a major issue. Some said that perhaps Tabor House should be open longer during weekends. 4 volunteers believed that the project would benefit from more paid staff, and 3 believed that Tabor should be more regularly at full capacity. Another interesting suggestion was that the rota should be made monthly and not weekly so that gaps and unfilled shifts can be more easily nullified due to increased notice. Also, somebody also stated that some guests become dependent on Tabor House and this sometimes becomes an issue. 3 abstained.

7. What makes Tabor house different from other night shelters?

5% said that the “choosy” or “strict” vetting and selection process that Tabor House has is what sets it apart from other night shelters. 24% believe that the way the project ensures that those who leave successfully are self-sufficient and able to live off the streets for the long term. Also, 32% of volunteers stated that Tabor House is the only permanent, all year round night shelter in Birmingham is what makes it unique. 16% stated that the welcoming, homely and helpful environment that listens and supports guests sets it apart. 5% stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge of other shelters to answer the question. 2% abstained.

8. From 1 to 10, how successful do you believe Tabor House has been at moving Guests on successfully?

1/10: 0

2/10: 1

Mean = 6.49

3/10: 1	Median = 7
4/10: 1	
5/10: 6	Mode = 7
6/10: 7	
7/10: 8	Range = 8
8/10: 6	
9/10: 5	
10/10: 1	

The majority of volunteers believe that Tabor House has been successful at moving guests on to lives free of homelessness. The average score out of 10 for this success is 7 (Mode and Median.)

9. What is your reason for the score you chose on the previous question?

Those who rated the success of Tabor House highly cited the success of moving guests on as the main reason, and someone stated that this success has only increased as the project became more established. Multiple volunteers said

that they had picked a neutral answer because they didn't know how successful the project had been. Some also said they believed the success rate would be higher if there were more staff involved in the project. Those who gave lower scores stated that they believed that there have been many guests who have stayed for too long and that inappropriate guests have been allowed in. However, one volunteer pointed out "that you cannot expect success in absolutely every case."

10. Do you believe that Tabor could expand into a larger project in the future?

72% of volunteers believed that Tabor House could realistically expand into a larger project. Reasons for this included that it has a good model which works and can be replicated, and also that there is a demand for Tabor House and where there is demand, supply should follow. Whereas, only 10% believed that this could be a reality. Reasons included issues with finding enough volunteers or funding. 16% were unsure. Their thoughts included issues over sustainable funding and rota problems.

Impact on stakeholders and the local community



Volunteer training event.

“I lost my flat, I spent 2 nights on the street with nothing, without Tabor I would have remained on the streets.”

Who are the Stakeholders?

Tabor House is one of many projects and organisations that are battling homelessness across Birmingham and it affects many groups. Stakeholders include the volunteers (see previous sections), paid staff, guests (see previous sections), Father Hudson's Care and iShelter. Other stakeholders can be found in the organisations fighting homelessness alongside Tabor and the local community, such as SIFA fireside, various churches such as St. Anne's Church, Let's Feed Brum and many others.

Stakeholder survey

Like with the volunteers, a survey was sent out to stakeholders such as Father Hudson's care, other homelessness organisations and outreach groups, as well as churches, asking them 10 questions about Tabor House and their opinions on various issues concerning the project.

The Survey was open from the 4th September to 18th September.



Donation given to Tabor Christmas 2018.

Results

1. Do you believe Tabor House would benefit from better advertising?

For this question 70% of those who answered stated that they believed that Tabor House would benefit from better advertising, but 30% believed that the current level of industry and public knowledge about the project is sufficient.

2. How often do you refer people to Tabor House? (May not apply to all.)

Only 10% said that they referred people often to Tabor House, and 90% said they did not. Reasons included that there is not enough room, they are unsure of the process or that they not directly linked to Tabor House.

3. What do you believe would make the referral system more efficient?

Answers to this were diverse. 30% said that they were not able to answer. Other responses included a more transparent referral system, having fixed appointment times so that

referrals could be planned and having more up to date information on vacancies at Tabor.

4. What makes Tabor House different from other night shelters?

Answers were again varied. Some praised the skills of the paid management staff at the project and other said that the strength based approach was what set Tabor House apart. One also said “the ethos behind it is great, and the service seems to be very appropriate as a stepping stone for more permanent solutions.”

5. Do you believe Tabor House has been successful at moving people on?

For this question, 90% of those who answered believed that Tabor House has been successful in its aim of moving homeless people on to sustainable and self-sufficient life. Comments included praise for the management staff and their experience for helping Tabor House to be so successful, and another said that the project provides support after guests leave. However, 10% said they believed Tabor House had not been successful, and one stated their reason for this was that

people are asked to leave without having jobs. (There can be reasons for this, for example if a guest is asked to leave for poor conduct).

6. What does Tabor House do well?

10% of those who responded abstained from this question, but 50% of them noted how the friendly, empathetic and welcoming nature of the support Tabor House provides is the project’s strong point. However, 20% stated that they believed that the permanent nature of the shelter is the standout feature, and another 20% said that the way the project adapts to the needs of the guests set it apart.

7. How could Tabor House improve?

20% did not answer this question. However, 50% believed that Tabor House would be more impactful if it increased the capacity, allowing for more beds and more guests. The other 30% also agreed that expansion was necessary for improvement though not in capacity but through the networks Tabor House operates in. For example, someone suggested looking into helping those in the immigration system who need

support while another said that more organisations should be used for referrals.

8. Do you believe that Tabor House could expand in the future?


100% of those who answered stated that Tabor House could expand successfully. A few answers said that the demand for another Tabor House is there, so supply should follow, and another said that the project has a “good model” which should be replicated.

9. Have you visited Tabor House’s web pages on Father Hudson’s and iShelter's websites?

Of those who answered 70% said yes whereas 30% said no.

10. Do you believe that Tabor House would benefit from its own independent website?

Like with question 9, 70% said yes and 30% said no.



“The landlord said to me why would I let you stay here for a £100 per week when I can get £227 from someone on benefits. At Tabor I could keep my job and sleep well at night.”

Conclusion

To conclude, during its first 2 years the project has learnt a great deal about working with people experiencing homelessness in Birmingham. 58 people have stayed at the project over this time and more than half of these (53%) have moved on to employment and their own accommodation. For those who did not achieve this, they were still able to take a break from the street and have the time to make good next steps for themselves. There have been some issues and challenges, but overall the shelter accomplishes its aims due to the management staff, volunteers, stakeholders and the guests themselves working together to combat homelessness in Birmingham.

The project works with each guest based on the situation they find themselves in. The part time caseworker and volunteer mentors provide invaluable support to the guests as they work to move away from the streets for good. Almost three quarters of volunteers (72%) said that the project could expand in the future, and 16% were unsure. Although volunteers did identify

certain issues, for example 72% believing that the project should be better advertised, the vast majority of answers to the survey backed the conclusion that Tabor House's impact has been largely positive.

In addition, it is not only the volunteers who believe in the potential of Tabor House's model, but also the majority of stakeholders. 90% stated that they believed the project is successful at providing guests the better future they seek, and 100% stated that Tabor House has the capability to expand in the future. Again, although there were some areas for improvement identified by this survey, such as the referral process and the need for a website, the responses were mostly positive.

Finally, the great work Tabor House has done, is doing and will continue to do is reflected in the opinions and experiences of the guests who have stayed with the project. The permanent nature of the shelter and the strength-based approach that it takes has changed the lives of many people who previously had little chance of escaping their homelessness. The project has been an overall success, and this success should continue into the future.