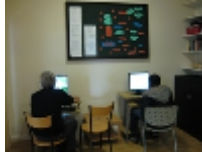


Comfort from Homelessness.

"It allows people to keep in touch with family." – Cathy Hembry.



As a title, 'Winter Comfort for the Homeless' might be a misnomer – in fact, the charity provides support and services for the homeless people of Cambridge all year round.

Clearly, the winter months are when there is crucial need for the charity's physical shelter (and the cooked breakfast provided free for rough sleepers.) But the organisation's core activities are ongoing, aiming to address both short- and long-term challenges faced by this section of society.

"We have a number of services," explains Cathy Hembry, the charity's Director. "There are those that address people's immediate needs and problems – things such as showers, breakfast, but also support with access to health care and other services. Then, during the day, we'll provide things such as learning and development, longer-term and aspirational services, and diversionary activities."

"We also have two social enterprises – WinterWillow, which provides jobs for homeless people, and Food4Food, which provides training in catering."

With software donated through the CTX scheme, Cathy and her team have been able to set up a facility that might seem inessential to the outsider, but that has proved hugely popular with users – a networked IT suite for homeless people.

Using Microsoft Small Business Server as its base, the suite allows rough sleepers and other homeless people to enjoy activities that many take for granted. "People use it for all sorts of things," explains Cathy. "They access YouTube, watch movies, listen to music. They'll also use it to do job searches and write their CV's – and we've introduced workshops to help them develop their IT skills."

The suite provides one other big benefit – all to do with communication, email and the internet.

"It allows people to keep in touch with family," says Cathy. "It is a very safe way of maintaining or re-establishing contact with people. Many of our users will have experience of a family breakdown, and this facility provides a way back that in many ways minimises risk."

Although the sheer popularity of the suite sometimes means that all workstations are taken, its users are generally cheerful to make way should somebody be waiting, and there is great appreciation of the facility.

Cathy is now looking into Flickr and other multimedia packages from CTX. "They would be valuable and really effective additions," she says.

"I had no idea that a scheme like CTX was accessible to us," she concludes. "We got our server and our Office software, and now we have Symantec anti-virus software to protect us. Thank you, and make sure you keep going strong!"

Who are they?
WINTER COMFORT FOR
THE HOMELESS.

Where are they?
Cambridge.

What do they do?
Provide support and services
for homeless people in
Cambridge.

How big are they?
Turnover approx £250,000.

What did they receive?
Microsoft Office Professional,
Small Business Server,
Windows 7; Symantec
Endpoint Protection.

The outcome?
Amongst other things, an IT
suite and network for
homeless people.

www.wintercomfort.org.uk