

North Wiltshire Homelessness Project in Chippenham



***December 2003
to November
2005***

**Pilot Project
Completion**

Report by Margaret Cleverley



“Homeless? There aren’t any in Chippenham!”

In 2003, when the project began, a common response from local people was that there was no single homelessness in North Wiltshire and no need for a dedicated service. But local professionals in all sectors reported that they regularly saw homeless single people but that no one agency was responsible for collating information about them. We set up a 2-year pilot drop-in to find out more.

The Partners

The Project was a successful partnership between CVS North Wiltshire and The Salvation Army, Chippenham Corps and was supported by an Advisory Group including representatives from CVS, The Salvation Army, North Wiltshire District Council, the Mental Health Care Trust, North Wiltshire Citizen’s Advice Bureau, the Probation Service and Community First.

A much wider group of interested Church, voluntary and statutory agencies and individuals offered advice and support as needed and received regular reports.

The Pilot Project aimed to:

- Identify the true extent of housing insecurity in Chippenham
- Explore the support needs of homeless single people
- Evidence the need for a permanent service

What we did:

The Drop-in opened for two sessions a week on Monday mornings and Thursday afternoons in the Salvation Army Hall, Foghamshire, providing:

- A warm safe place for adults who were homeless or threatened with homelessness
- A free, hot two-course meal and laundry facilities
- Donated clothing and food parcels
- Sleeping bags
- Simple activities e.g. table tennis, newspapers, computer games
- Befriending and support from the Manager, Support Worker and trained Volunteers
- Signposting to specialist services such as NWDC Homelessness services, medical care, Benefits, CAB, tenancy support, mental health and drugs agencies
- Information from leaflets and the Internet
- Music improvisation sessions

From September 2005, thanks to funding from the Mayor of Chippenham's Charity 2004/5, we opened for an extra session on Wednesday afternoons offering computer classes and the first sessions of a 10-week arts project funded by the Anchor Foundation and North Wilts District Council. These activities aimed to build skills and increase the self-confidence of guests.

What we learnt

'Staying with friends and relatives is a common homeless experience across England but appears to be most common in rural areas.....Although a positive experience for some, staying with friends or relatives is typically characterised by insecurity, poor living conditions, limited privacy and restrictions on behaviour and lifestyle.'

From The Countryside Agency Research Notes Issue CRN 74 December 2003

Between January 2004 and November 2005, more than 150 individuals used the Homelessness Project pilot day centre and at the end of year 2 the centre has more than 30 regular users. By the middle of 2005 we were achieving our target average attendance of 20 guests per session. We found that:

- Homelessness is largely a hidden problem in North Wiltshire. Nearly 40% - were staying with friends or family when they first attended the centre
- Although about 1/3 of guests were sleeping outdoors when they first approached us most soon found help from friends and acquaintances.
- No more than 7 were sleeping rough at any time
- Ages ranged from 15 to 84. Average age was 32.
- 25% were women
- Over 98% were white British
- Most guests had strong local connections with Chippenham/North Wiltshire
- Most became homeless after a relationship breakdown (38%)
- Many had complex needs including mental health issues, substance use, poor life skills, violent relationships
- 10% of those seeking help were in secure accommodation but had complex issues which affect their ability to manage their affairs
- Many returned to the centre for support even after they had been rehoused

More detailed statistics relating to year 2 of the project are available in appendix 2

Signs of Change

We have contributed significantly to safety in the local community – the Police reported a fall of over 21% in violent and drug-related crime in Chippenham during our first year of opening. An independent guest survey in 2005 concluded:

'All the guests surveyed described lives, before coming to the centre, that were on the edge – they felt unable to cope and were all at risk of loosing what little they had.

They came to the centre for the food and they stayed for the normality, becoming organised and more confident.

The guests were fed and made friends. The centre offered routine and support combined with other practical services. The guests said that this gave them increased confidence and emotional strength as well as the practical necessities to make changes in their lives.

In time they committed less crime, were helped to stop or keep off addictions and were more able to organise their lives.'

From 'Lives on the Edge' by Karolyne Fudge Malik, Bufferzone 2005

And Guests said:

"I have been visiting the SALVATION ARMY for approximately two years, they have helped me a great deal and the staff is kind and helpful, if it wasn't for them I would be either back in prison or whatever, eg: Lost the sence to live."

From a guest with long-term alcohol dependency 2005

"I still come to (the drop-in)... It was the first time I'd found people who believed in me. They don't tell you what to do, unless you ask for advice. They don't judge you. If somebody slips back, like on drugs, they just say 'OK let's start again'."

From a recovering heroin addict, now in temporary housing

"I would like to thank you all for the help and support that I have received from you in the past few months,

your hard work and perseverance with me has worked, I have been offered the chance to sort my life out by moving to Swindon. Thanks again for your help and support.”

From a Young Guest in B&B 2004

Resources

People

At the end of Year 2 we have 3 part-time staff and 25 highly trained and dedicated volunteers who bring a wide variety of life experience and skills to the task and have created the welcoming, positive atmosphere at the drop-in. Without our volunteers we have no future.

Our Volunteers say:

“At other centres guests arrive and get their food, then take it to their tables. At (this homelessness project) staff and volunteers sit down with guests at the tables and take time to listen and support them. It may seem to be a small difference. But the guests really appreciate it and the effect is to build trust and openness and friendliness. I think these are the key elements to (the drop-in).”

Volunteer who also supports homeless people in Bristol and Bath

We have an excellent record for recruiting and retaining volunteers. The following quotes are from volunteers who have been with the project since we opened in 2004:

“There were times when working at the centre seemed boring and run-of-the-mill and I wondered why I was there. Then someone would tell you something they hadn't been able to share with anyone before. And then it all made sense - that's what makes everything worthwhile - that's why I'm there!”

And:

“I am a volunteer helping to cook and serve breakfasts...on a Monday morning...As I look back I feel there is a change with the guests, they are a lot more talkative and they are happier, but what I like to

see is how they help and encourage each other and have more pride in themselves...All the hard work is worth it when you are greeted with a lovely smile and a look of surprise when you tell them you have missed them if they have missed a week or two.”

Resources

Funding

“We should all put together a sponsored jump to raise more funds”

From Guest Suggestion box 2005

The Salvation Army Chippenham Corps has contributed staff time, premises and facilities free of all charge equivalent to approximately 25% of our running costs. We are very grateful to Chippenham Borough Lands Charity who gave funding towards the Centre Manager post and to the following individuals and organisations who provided the remainder of the funding:

- Westlea Housing Association
- NWDC Area 3 Committee
- NWDC and The Community Safety Partnership
- The Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation
- The J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust
- Lloyds TSB Charitable Trust for England and Wales
- The Tudor Trust
- The Anchor Foundation
- A variety of local individuals, businesses and Churches

We are also very grateful for substantial gifts of food, clothing and volunteer time from local Churches and individuals and for gifts of food from local businesses.

We were proud to be selected by the Mayor of Chippenham, Cllr Ross Henning, as his Mayoral Charity in 2004/5. His Mayoral Ball and the subsequent sponsored parachute jump performed by Debbie Yarrow (on behalf of Cllr Henning), Captain Mary Wolfe and Hannah Jones, our Admin Assistant raised a grand total of £3,314, which enabled us to open for the extra Wednesday session from September 2005.

Finally we would like to thank Stephen Pickering of Pickering Communications who wrote and produced the first edition of our news magazine, Doorway entirely free of charge

A detailed financial report at the end of year 2 is available in Appendix 1

Conclusions

The North Wiltshire Homelessness Project pilot scheme has not only provided clear proof of the existence of single homelessness in North Wiltshire but has provided evidence of the complex needs of most of our guests, which cannot be addressed by the provision of housing alone.

We have already made a significant contribution not only to the welfare of some of the most marginalised people in the area but also to the safety of the community at large. We have seen clear signs in a number of individuals of increased self-esteem and confidence that they can take control of their lives.

There is clear evidence to prove the need for an ongoing service.

Future Plans

The partners, CVS North Wiltshire and The Salvation Army, Chippenham Corps, are committed to formalising their partnership and to go on to develop a permanent service.

In 2006 The Salvation Army hall will undergo a major refurbishment which will improve facilities at the centre and make possible additional services, such as personal showers, for our guests.

We will use the experience gained in the last two years to:

- **Consolidate the pilot project into a permanent service for homeless single adults and**
- **Acknowledge and address the needs of adults who are not homeless but who lack life skills or have lifestyles which affect their ability to maintain a tenancy**
- **Develop a sustainable funding strategy**
- **Reach out to homeless and marginalised adults who need our support in the rest of North Wiltshire**
- **Work with other specialist agencies to enhance the support services we can provide at the centre**
- **Develop new projects within the service aimed at supporting those who wish to break the downward spiral of homelessness and marginalisation and move on in their lives**
- **Focus on guest empowerment by continuing to work with user-led agencies such as SWUF (South West Users' Forum)**
- **Raise local awareness of the needs of homeless and socially excluded people in our community**
- **Open for more sessions as soon as funding allows**
- **Work to integrate the drop-in into a comprehensive service for homeless and marginalised adults in North Wiltshire, including a local direct access hostel**

Appendix 1

North Wiltshire Homelessness Project Pilot Scheme Income and Expenditure
Yr 2 1.12.04 to 30.11.05

<u>Heading</u>	<u>Actual Expenditure</u> (excl SA contribution) £	<u>SA Contribution in Kind</u> £
<u>Expenditure:</u>		
<i>Staff</i>		
P/T Centre Manager (22 hours pt 29)	14,354	
Admin.support (4-8 hours pt 12)	1,585	
P/T Support Worker (10 hours pt 29)		6,178
P/T Pastoral support (3 hours pt 29)		2,015
P/T Cleaner		455
Total	15,939	8,648
<i>Other staff costs</i>		
Recruitment	0	
Staff travel	271	
Staff training, networking	220	
Personal Security	188	
Health & Safety/Protective Clothing	170	
Total	849	
<i>Volunteer Costs</i>		
Recruitment	82	
Induction, training, networking	4,149	
Food	158	
Expenses, incl. travel, respite, child care etc	1,120	
Health and Safety/protective clothing		
Total	5,509	
<i>Pastoral Support</i>		
Counselling and clinical supervision	200	
<i>Centre Costs</i>		
Rent, gas, electricity and all services		2,000
Maintenance/Repairs etc		
Maintenance/repairs		1,100
Cleaning materials	148	
Total	148	1,100
<i>Office costs</i>		
Office accommodation		833
Postage, printing, stationery	788	
BT phone and internet service	1,072	
Insurance		50
Total	1,860	883
Totals c/f	24,505	12,631

	Totals b/f	24,505	12,631
<i>Equipment</i>			
Purchase/replacement of equipment		2,333	
<i>Services for clients</i>			
Food		675	
Consultancy fee, user involvement		1,000	
Wednesday Activities		869	
Guest Services(toiletries etc)		520	
	Total	3,064	
<i>Project Costs</i>			
Monitoring & Review		220	
Publicity		348	
	Total	568	
CVS & SA Management costs		1,538	663
Total Expenditure		32,007	13,294
<u>Income Excluding SA Contribution in Kind:</u>			
		£	
Chippenham Borough Lands Charity		10,000	
Safety Partnership		4,000	
The Tudor Trust		5,000	
Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales		5,700	
Income carried forward from Year 1		17,109	
Mayor's Charity & Parachute Jump		3,686	
Unsolicited Donations		2,850	
Total Income		48,345	

Difference = balance c/f to 2005/6	-16,338
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Notes

Balance c/f to 2005/6 includes a provision of £1,450 for staff team building Away Day which took place in January 2006

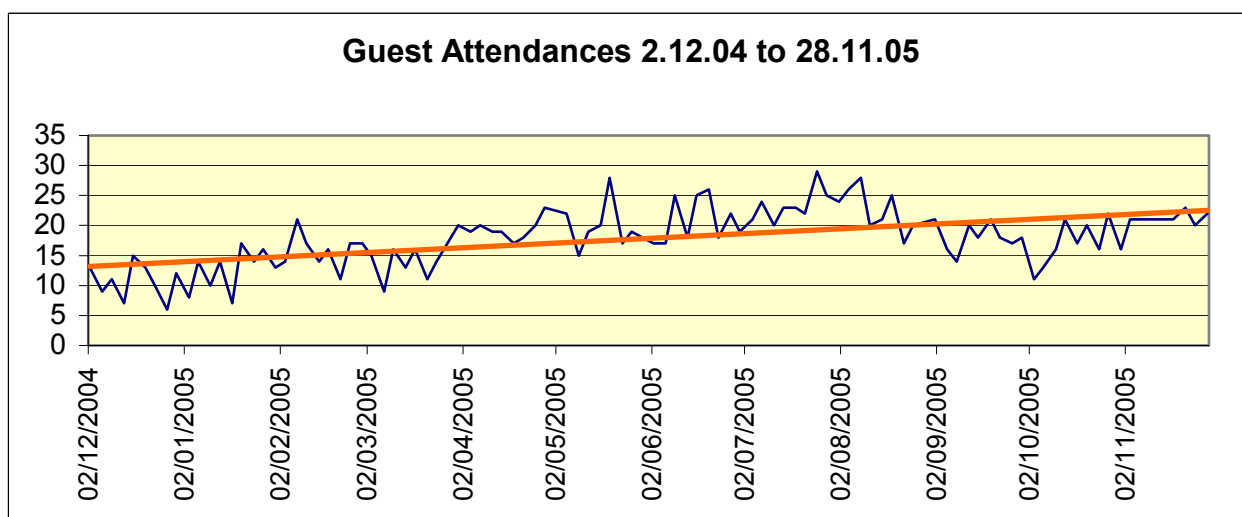
Appendix 2

The Nature of Homelessness in North Wiltshire Results from Year 2 of the Pilot Project

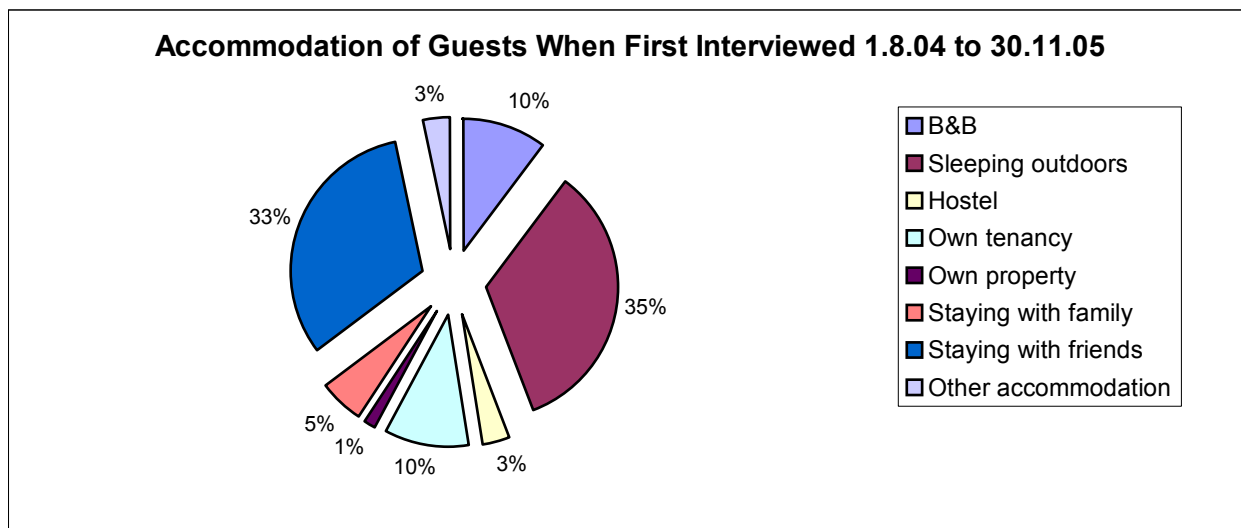
Monitoring the Project

Quantitative information was gathered on a regular basis. Results were as follows:

- **Hours donated by volunteers**
 - The centre opened for 116 sessions during Year2 including 4 music improvisation and 1 arts workshop and 10 computer classes. Volunteers contributed 2,700 hours of their time, i.e. about 23 hours per session. (In addition the majority of volunteers also attended induction or training sessions during the period.)
- **Numbers of guests attending each session:**



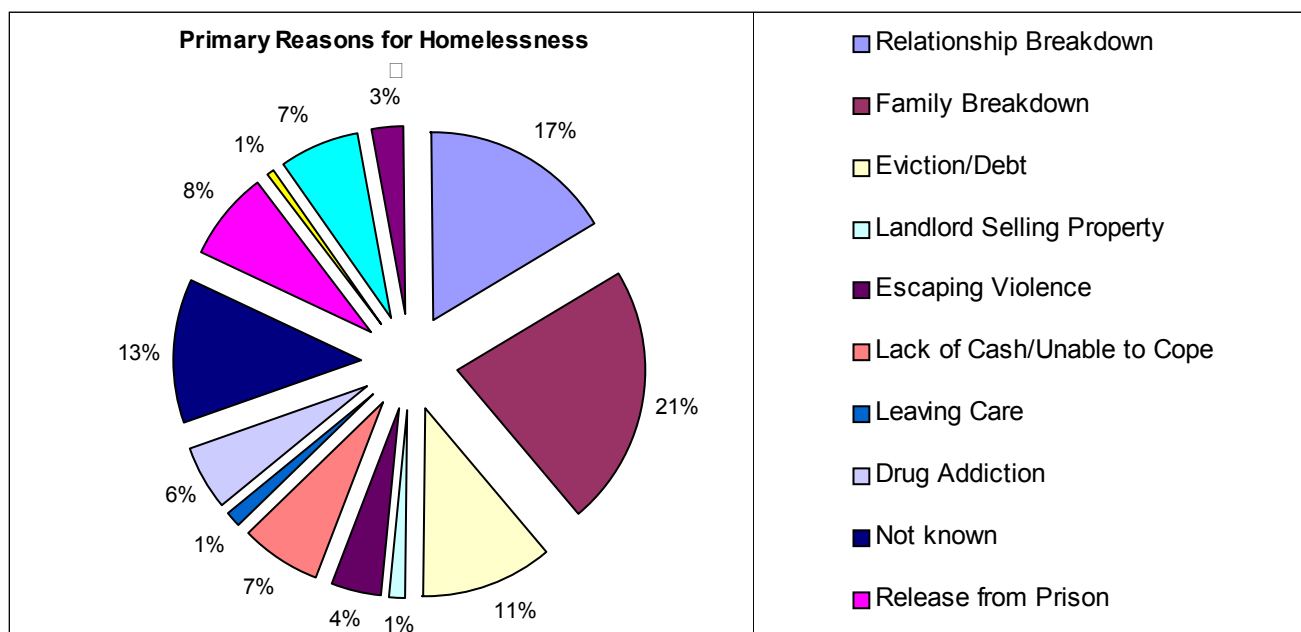
- Year 2 Average attendance was just under 18 guests per session. (Year 1 (second half) average attendance was 12 per session)
- Average attendance in second half of Year 2 was just over 20 guests per session



NB 35% of guests who were willing to give personal information at first meeting (i.e. 50 people) said that they were sleeping outdoors when first interviewed. The majority were eventually accommodated by friends or acquaintances and became the 'hidden homeless' of North Wiltshire.

Primary Reasons for homelessness

- Guests were asked how they became homeless in the first instance. Their responses were as follows:



- **Numbers of meals served:**

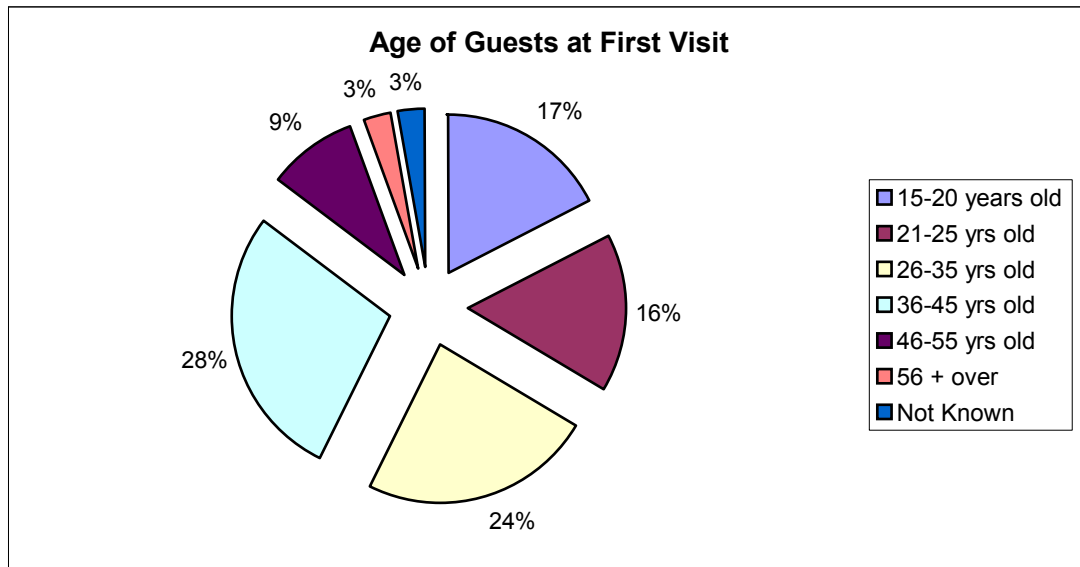
1785 guest visits were recorded in Year2 and 1667 meals were served. In addition parcels containing donated food and clothing were given out at all sessions. Sleeping bags and occasionally tents were also available free of charge as required. Sleeping bags were donated by The Salvation Army and by the public. The tents, clothing and much of the food were donated by the public. Food also came from local Churches and businesses.

Personal Information about Guests

Since July 2004 Personal data have been gathered from each guest who was willing, relating to: age, gender, ethnicity, local connections and further needs.

Results are as follows:

- **Age**



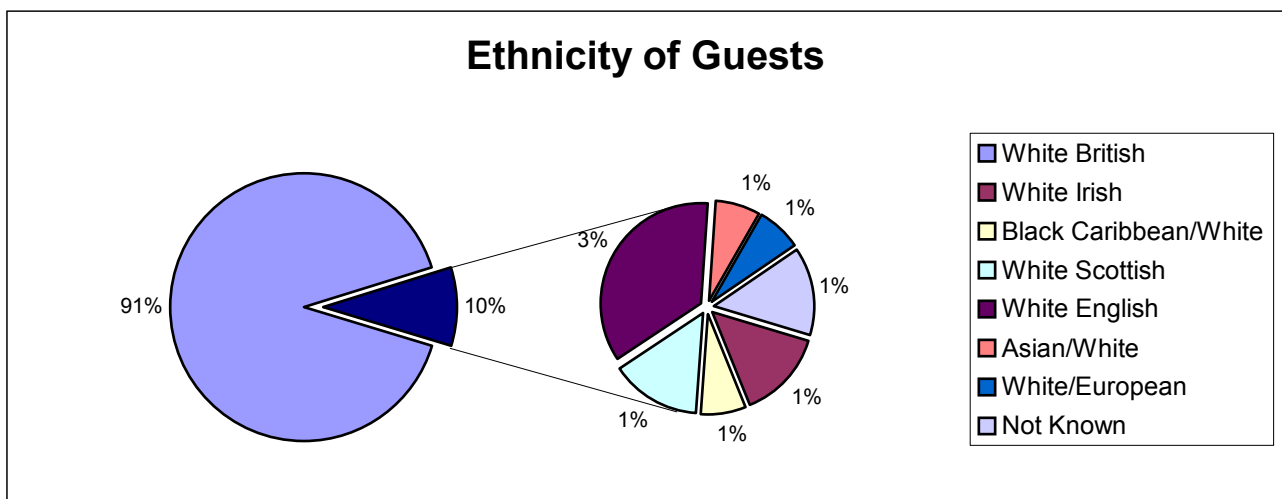
The average age of all guests was 32.

- **Gender**

- Overall 25% of guests were female. Nationally, it is believed that female homelessness is under-reported and that homeless women tend not to seek out support services such as the drop-in.

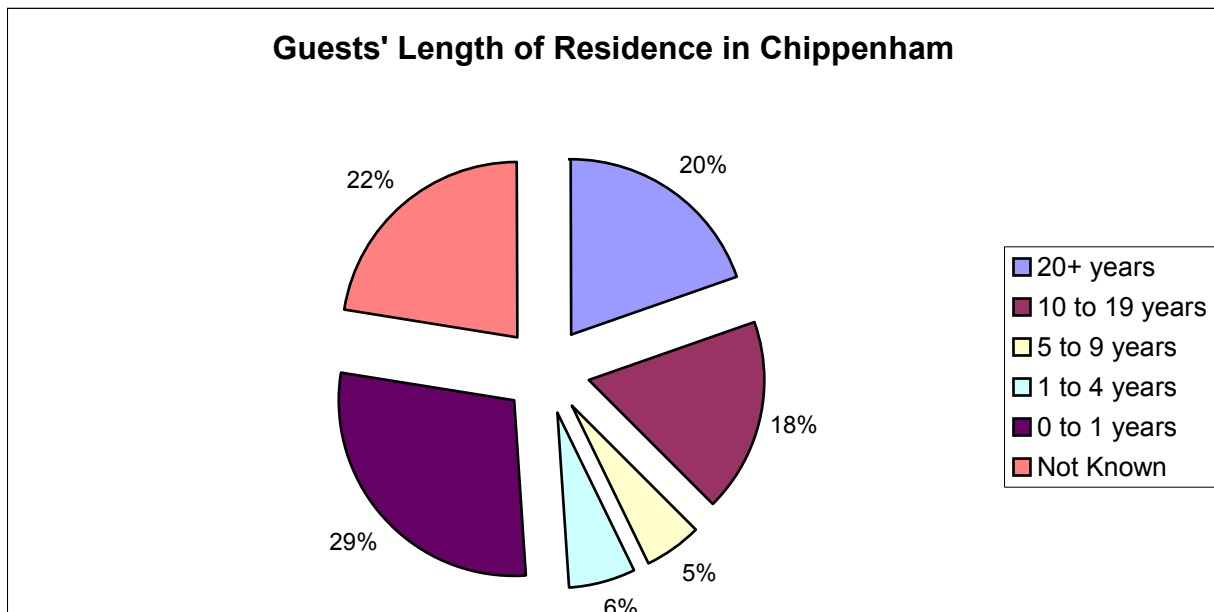
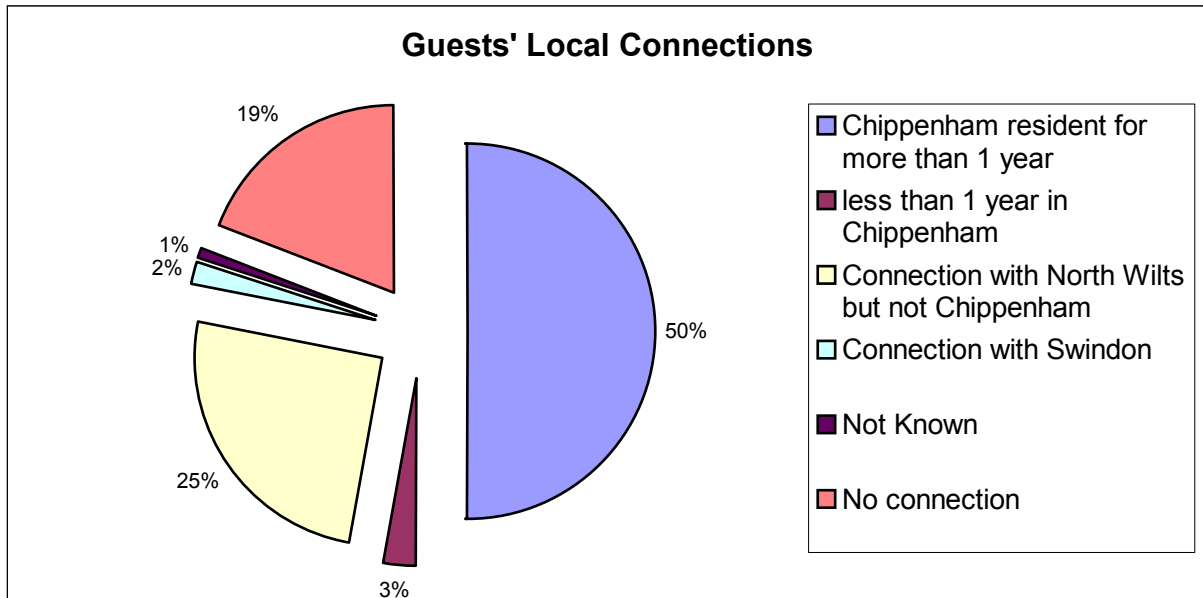
- **Ethnicity**

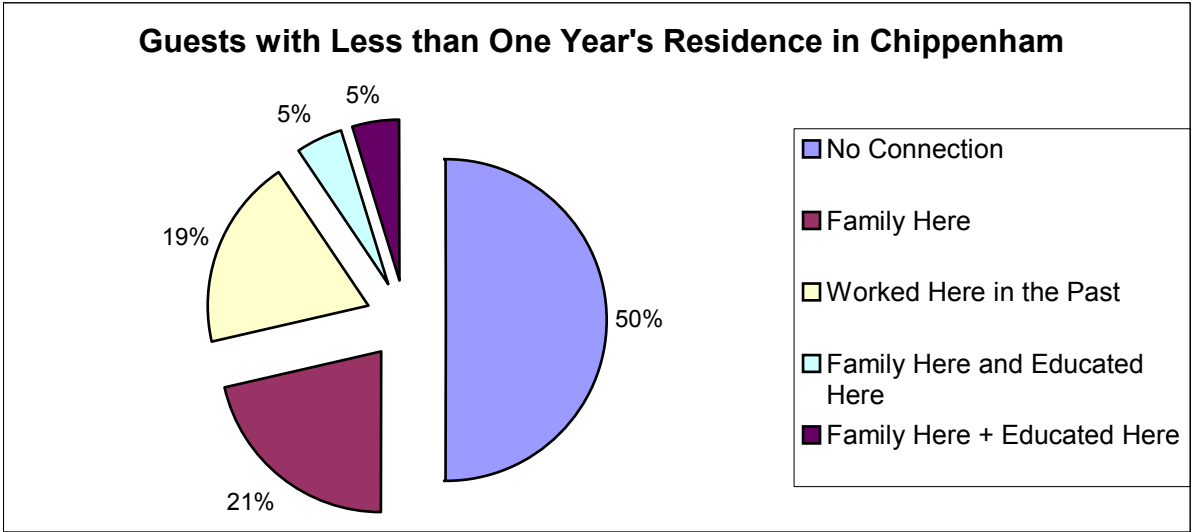
- Over 98% of guests who described their ethnic background said they were white/ British, Scots, Irish or English. This is in line with local census data.



- **Local Connections**

- 78% of guests when interviewed at their first visit said they had local connections with Chippenham or North Wiltshire, although sometimes they were vague about details such as length of previous residence in the area.





• **Further Needs**

- Guests were asked at their first visit whether they had needs in addition to their housing needs. The needs expressed may have been influenced by guests' knowledge that the project did not offer accommodation of any kind. Guests only asked for what they thought might be possible.

