

# Covid-19 accommodation: Helping people self-isolate in safety in Oxford

In response to the pandemic we ran **30** emergency hotels across the areas where we work, including Oxford. A year on, we have housed **344** people in the area, with **154** more moving on to longer-term accommodation. Our Oxford Senior Services Manager, Ellie Alway-Thomas reflects on an eventful year.

Looking back at the early days of the pandemic, it is amazing how naïve we all were to the situation. I was convinced that it would all blow over quite quickly, then lockdown was announced and before we knew it we were moving tens of people into a Travelodge – that's when it began to feel real. It was scary, but there was also a sense of excitement, as suddenly we were able to provide people with a self-contained room, a food delivery service and even an ensuite bathroom.

The first week was organised chaos. The speed in which the team worked was incredible. I remember having a long line of about 20-40 individuals outside the hotel and literally running around the building booking people into their rooms as quickly as possible. Once they were in, we were supporting people to make sure they could access medication and other support they needed.

We quickly went from one hotel to five, offering around 120 bed spaces to people experiencing homelessness, so they could safely self-isolate. One of the hotels was dedicated to people that were considered medically vulnerable to Covid-19. There were a lot of unknowns for both staff and clients. It was strange to feel so out of control and not being able to reassure our clients about how long they'd be staying here for.

We have worked closely with partners including Turning Point, who have helped people access medication they needed, and Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, who coordinated various donations from the local community.

A year on, we've achieved some amazing things. We've seen individuals gain employment, reconnect with family and move into independent accommodation. The dedication from the team and the resilience of our clients is inspiring.

Ellie Alway-Thomas,  
Oxford Senior Services Manager



“Access to emergency accommodation has been a lifeline for our clients. We swiftly ensured people's needs were met, while remodelling our services to provide longer-term accommodation units and strengthening our relationships with partners and working together for positive outcomes. Seeing clients at our service progress was a massive silver lining to the global pandemic.”

**Amie, Deputy Manager,  
Canterbury House in Oxford**

## Our impact in 2020-21

In Oxford we have housed

**344**

people in emergency Covid-19 accommodation.



**154**

people have now moved on to longer-term accommodation.

