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Mentor & Coach

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MATTHEW 25 MISSION

Homelessness, depression and mental health, The Matthew 25 Mission is immersed in these issues on a daily basis.

To put the issues into context, 900 guests came through our doors in July, and of these, the main issues were:

- homelessness/serious housing issues 39%
- mental health problems 11%
- other significant percentages were recorded under the headings
- 'loneliness' and 'addictions/in recovery'.

The majority of our guests have multiple problems/issues. The above figures relate to what appears to be the predominant issue for each person.

We estimate that some 95% of all our guests suffer from depression

One of our Hall Manager's key responsibilities is to meet guests and to assess how we might best be able to help them. For guests suffering from depression and other mental health issues, many

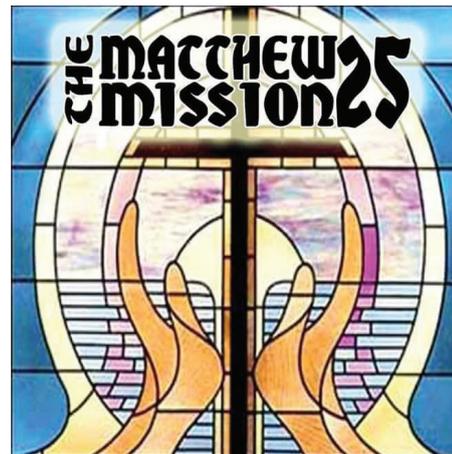
factors may have an influence, for example recent (or not so recent) traumatic events in their lives, the effects of homelessness, addictions, unemployment, family strife, bereavement, etc, recent (even very minor) adjustments to their medication.

Some arrive with suicidal thoughts or intentions and in the most serious cases we may enlist the support of the police from the outset, for the guest's own protection and safety.

We offer all guests a warm and friendly welcome, and a 'listening ear'. For many of them - who arrive feeling totally isolated - their encounter with Matthew 25 staff is (they say) the first time they feel that someone is supportive and "on their side".

We offer them nourishing food, which is often a neglected priority for many of our guests, and helps put them in a better frame of mind.

As we learn (maybe gradually) more about their underlying circumstances, including the factors above, as well as offering them an everyday safe space, we can offer them appropriate support, which can range from



encouraging them to engage with appropriate medical agencies, support agencies like 'Health in Mind', or work with them in a whole variety of ways to help them to address and work through the underlying issues.

Simply the provision of a welcoming 'drop-in' environment, a non-judgemental and 'no strings attached' attitude, and some support in addressing their underlying issues can play a major part in relieving the pressure on someone suffering from depression, and real change (eg a noticeable change in demeanour, a more positive outlook) can become apparent, sometimes quite quickly.

Graham Horsnell
Matthew 25 Mission

