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# Group sleep rough for charity

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The issue of homelessness was brought into sharp focus for a group that slept outside overnight with nothing but cardboard, a sleeping bag and pillows for comfort.

The group slept outside at Sturmer Garden Centre from Friday night to Saturday morning in order to raise money for REACH Community Projects in Haverhill and the work it does to help people in need.

Called *The Big Garden Centre Sleepout* it was organised by the garden centre's co-owner, Angela Andreea and raised nearly £3,000 to help people in crisis, those at risk of losing their home and those already homeless.

The issue is one that Katie Chappell, REACH's head of fundraising (and one of those that slept out) said has become all too familiar in recent times.

After thanking Angela and all the volunteers for their support, Katie said: "In the past seven months we have helped 20 homeless people and 32 sofa surfers.

"We just want to make sure nobody else finds themselves in that position which is why our help with eviction notices is crucial and we urge people to get in touch if facing difficulties."



Katie Chappell, Leigh and Carol Carter - all from REACH Community Projects - at Sturmer Garden Centre, where they slept outside overnight for the Big Garden Centre Sleepout.

All sleepers reported positively on the experience, no matter how they slept, saying how "thought-provoking" it was, said Katie.

She added: "What for us was one uncomfortable night is for many the norm.

"It doesn't take much to throw a household into crisis, especially

those on low income, or when a sudden accident happens or a relationship breaks down."

Angela said: "You forget what it's like for somebody that doesn't have a bed to sleep in and you never know what's round the corner."

Carol Carter, one of the 'rough sleepers', said: "It is amazing to think

people do this every day as part of their lives.

"They don't have a bed so they sleep outside and we've just experienced it. I feel very fortunate that I have a bed and a home."

To donate go to [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) and search for Sturmer Garden Centre

## NEWS 7

### Contact centre scores well in caller checks

A mystery shopper exercise at South Cambridgeshire District Council's customer contact centre found 98 per cent of advisors answered enquiries to a high standard.

Conducted by an independent team of 16 researchers, the exercise involved 400 calls made at various times of day and across the week - at the council's busiest time of year.

The calls tested the centre's responsiveness, professionalism, and knowledge across a range of services and the results show:

- The centre achieved an average customer satisfaction score of 81 per cent across all service areas. This compares to a benchmark score of 68 per cent amongst other councils.

- It earned a Net Promoter Score of +43, above other councils' scores, indicating customers are likely to recommend the service to others.

- Every advisor gave their name to the customer and nearly every call was classed as 'jargon free'.

- Customer service advisors were consistently praised for their politeness, helpfulness, and ability to resolve queries effectively.

- The centre demonstrated strong knowledge across diverse service areas, including council tax, recycling and waste, and homelessness.