

# Churches for Tunbridge Wells



An Ecumenical Christian Charity  
[www.tunbridgewellswintershelter.co.uk](http://www.tunbridgewellswintershelter.co.uk)

## Volunteer Handbook 2017

*This document is available via the Project Manager, in the Winter Shelter Reference File provided to each participating church.*

*It is intended as a guide, not as an instruction manual on how to deal with every eventuality, and should be interpreted and applied with awareness of the complexities of working with this particular client group. There is no substitute for the practical hands-on experience of volunteering within the shelter.*

**‘And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.’ Micah 6:8 NIV**

**‘Preach the gospel, if necessary use words.’ Francis of Assisi**

**‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ Galatians 3:28 (NIV)**

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## **Welcome to the Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter 2017 (TWCWS)**

Recognising the injustices in this world is important. We are, however, also called to take action. By volunteering for the Winter Shelter 2017 you will be walking alongside some of the most marginalised people in today's society. Thank you for supporting the winter shelter, whatever your involvement. We pray that your participation will help you grow in faith and love.

The winter shelter does not just provide a roof and food during the coldest period of the year. It also provides an opportunity to support rough sleepers as they start looking to the future and move on with their lives. In our sixth year, we look forward to building upon the great successes of previous years. We eagerly anticipate our guests benefitting from the support they receive to meet their health and social needs, and moving on towards being housed and employed. We ask that all our guests, staff and volunteers be blessed with a genuine openness that allows us all to both give and receive.

It is extremely heartening in a world of increasing consumerism to again see so many people being so ready to give of their time, talents and resources to help meet the needs of others. It is a real privilege to work alongside our guests and volunteers in building a winter shelter community of love and warmth.

Thank you for all your support. Please pray that throughout the Winter Shelter 2017 we may be blessed with seeing Christ in everyone we meet, and serving Him in everything we do.

***Wendy Hogg & Jayne Hoose***  
***TWC Winter Shelter Team***  
***On behalf of the Management Committee***

## An Introduction to the Shelter

### Foundation

Tunbridge Wells Churches' Winter Shelter is a Christian response by Churches for Tunbridge Wells to the evident problem of rough sleeping and homelessness in Tunbridge Wells.

The Winter Shelter has its own Management Committee which is made up of Canon Rev Jim Stewart, Rev Cliff Allen, Fr John Caster, Major David Squirrell, Peter Querstret, Susan Schibli, David Stanesby, Vanessa Nicholls and Rev Miriam Barker.

Working relationships have been or will be forged with (amongst others) agencies including TWBC Housing Options Team and Gateway; Porchlight (a leading homelessness charity in Kent); CGL (drug & alcohol rehab services); the Salvation Army; TW Citizens Advice Bureau; TW Street Teams; Street Pastors; The Bridge Trust; YMCA; Colebrook Road Hostel; TW Community Support Unit (for Kent Police); The Kenwood Trust; health professionals and the Samaritans.

### Stated Aims and Purpose of the Winter Shelter

- To provide an evening and night shelter for homeless adults in Tunbridge Wells using church buildings, members and community volunteers through the coldest period of the winter.
- To help homeless people move on to appropriate accommodation, resisting dependency on the shelter, and, if appropriate, engage with appropriate agencies to reduce their addictions.
- To engage volunteers with some of the most vulnerable people in Tunbridge Wells without discrimination, expressing Christian compassion in building supportive relationships.
- To continue to learn from the experience of running the shelter and, if feasible, to establish the funding and administrative support necessary to enable the provision of such a shelter to continue and to grow in future years.

### Winter Shelter Chaplaincy

Spiritual care is quite a trendy concept; many organisations, including NHS hospitals and schools are obliged to give consideration to the spiritual care of the people they serve. It is to offer an holistic approach to care, considering the whole person we encounter. It's good; we were created as spiritual people and healing, wholeness, for each of us will have a spiritual facet to it.

So this year in the Winter Shelter we will again be a little more intentional about giving attention to the spiritual lives of our guests and are setting up a chaplaincy team. Chaplaincy is the ministry of presence. It's not about proselytising, more like journeying with people (the Road to Emmaus springs to mind, when Jesus just listened to the distressed disciples, walked with them and ultimately revealed himself in action rather than words).

The work of a chaplain is usually in response to invitation from those they minister to, although that might be after offering to pray, listen etc... So chaplains will be at the shelter each evening, often to eat with those there, and then to 'be' with them, willing to read scripture and discuss it, willing to listen and willing to pray. This is because we believe that God is a God of transformation, that he

will be at work both through the practical aspects of the shelter and through people meeting with Him and discovering that they are loved and precious to Him.

## TWCWS - For Whom?

- TWCWS is for men and women over 18 years of age regardless of their marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
- It is NOT for children or families.
- It has capacity for a maximum of 12 guests per night.
- The project is aimed primarily at rough sleepers with Local Connection to Tunbridge Wells Borough but accepts others subject to capacity.

**Dogs:** We are not able to accept dogs into the shelter although we might be able to get a dog looked after by a volunteer.

## Referrals

Guests are referred to the shelter by partner agencies or self-refer by means of completing a referral form and risk assessment.

The Project Manager or Support Worker are the custodians of the shelter referrals and “gatekeepers” of pre-clearance for admissions.

The Team Leader at each venue will be the “gatekeeper” at the venue each night and will ultimately decide if a pre-cleared guest is to be admitted.

It will be made clear at all points that there will be no direct access to the shelter. No persons will be admitted to the shelter just by turning up on the night.

Pre-booked guests must arrive at the shelter at 7.30pm and must have booked in before 8.30 pm or forfeit their bed.

## Who is involved?

The Shelter is staffed by a large pool of volunteers.

There are two paid staff: a Project Manager and a Support Worker on short term contracts, supported by the Management Committee.

Churches from across Tunbridge Wells.

## When?

The 12 bed project will run on a rolling basis across eleven church venues for seven nights each week, for nine weeks; 2nd January – 5th March 2017.

Guests will be present from 7.30 pm – 8 am.

## Where?

The Shelter moves almost every night. See Venue Table appended for details of the Church Hall venues:

Please don't hesitate to call the Project Manager on the shelter phone 07513 377951 if you are having problems finding a venue.

## How the shelter will run safely

TWCWS sees health and safety as being of paramount importance. We aim to make sure that the winter shelter venues are as safe as we can make them for our guests, staff, volunteers, church members, visitors and people from the local community.

We take seriously our responsibility for health and safety; we expect that all people working in and visiting our premises will do likewise. Our simple rule is that nobody should put themselves or others at risk whilst involved in the Winter Shelter project. By reading this handbook, familiarising yourself with the shelter policies and procedures, and attending the induction/training offered you can help to minimise risk and will be more confident in the unlikely event of an incident occurring.

Employer responsibility rests with the Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter as part of Churches for Tunbridge Wells. A full copy of our Health and Safety policy can be found in the Venue Reference Folder, or on request from the Project Manager.

## Building

Volunteers must be familiar with each building you are working in. Importantly you must:

- Know where the fire exits and fire extinguishers are.
- Team Leaders will know where the First Aid box, telephone and list of emergency numbers are, and communicate that to volunteers.
- Make sure that fire exits are unlocked and not blocked.
- Know the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
- Make sure that any areas where you do not want guests to go are secure.
- Make sure you are clear where guests can and cannot go.
- Team Leaders will identify a safe area to keep any valuables or alcohol handed in by guests for safe-keeping and give one volunteer responsibility for storing valuables.

## Before you open

The Team Leader will conduct a volunteer briefing session:

- Volunteers will “sign-in” (and out), and wear first name badges.
- Go through the logbook and discuss incidents, and inform the volunteers of any incidents, problems or concerns.
- If a problem can be anticipated; discuss it and agree what you will do; everybody should know how you will deal with it before you open.
- If you do not have enough volunteers and do not feel it is safe to open, delay your opening time
  - it is a good idea to go outside and talk to the people who are waiting and explain what is happening.
  - Contact the Project Manager!

## Guidelines on Personal Boundaries

- You must not give or lend money to guests: the Winter Shelter Reference Binder gives addresses of the Crisis Recovery Day Centre, Salvation Army and other agencies that are able to provide appropriate help to homeless people in genuine need.
- Do not give personal information especially your address, telephone number or e-mail address. Arrangements should not be made to meet with guests outside the Shelter unless it is an activity arranged by TWCWS.
- Make sure you are not left alone with a guest or leave a colleague alone. This is not only for your own safety but so that if anyone alleges an impropriety against you, there is a witness.
- Do not take guests to your home.
- For your own safety do not wear or bring valuables to the Shelter. Often there is

nowhere to store valuables safely.

- From time to time guests may wish to give gifts to volunteers. It is best not to accept gifts at all and the guest should be told that this is the policy. You should not encourage guests to give gifts.

## Opening Up

The Church Co-ordinator and Team Leader will be at the shelter each night from 6.15 pm to unlock the church, conduct the volunteer briefing, and manage guest admissions and bed allocation at the 8.30pm deadline. As Team Leaders become confident with the venue it may be that the Co-ordinator will give them a key to unlock.

## Handover

As a general rule, the Team Leader will be present through all three shifts at the shelter each night. If this is not possible, then a Deputy Team leader will take over for the time the Team Leader is absent. In this case, the Team Leader and Deputy should fully brief each other on any issues or special considerations at handover points.

## Rules for Guests

*\*fewer rules, more mutual respect\**

We keep the rules to a minimum, but for everyone's comfort and safety please note the following:

- No alcohol or drugs (including Legal Highs) to be consumed in or around the premises (we can look after unopened alcohol for guests).
- No violent, threatening, racist or other anti-social behaviour/language.
- No offensive weapons.
- No smoking inside the building (smoking is allowed outside in the designated area at the discretion of the staff and guests must be escorted. Butts in container provided please).
- No pets.
- Place is forfeited if not personally reserved and at the venue each night by 8.30pm.

For a more expanded explanation of TWCWS rules, please see the statement in the Reference File moved with the beds each day.

## Record Keeping – The Reference Folder & Team Leader Group e-mail.

The Reference Folder is extremely important, as it is:

- The “hard copy” on site of policies, contact details for management and other agencies, venue locations and Risk Assessments, blank log-in forms, incident forms etc
- Please look after the folder and maintain it accurately, advising PM of any shortages.

The Team Leader e-mail chain:

- is the principal means of communication between the 11 locations, passing on details of who arrived, who didn't and to record any incidents.
- A method used to book guests in for the following night.
- Used to record any appointments made on behalf of clients (and the outcome of those).
- One way in which we collect data and statistics, used to write a comprehensive report at the end of the scheme which may be used for future fund raising.

**Incidents:** When reporting incidents, please try to remain as objective as possible. Reports should be completed as soon as possible after an incident, dated (with time if possible) and signed by the author. If possible, another volunteer who has witnessed the incident should read the entry and counter-sign to validate it as a true account. If police are called, please enter a crime number.

***The Reference Folder is a confidential document that MUST at all times be kept in a secure place known to Church Co-ordinator(s) and Team Leader(s) with appropriate handover conducted between shifts and ensuring safe handover with the beds and venue boxes for the following night.***

## Outcomes

It is important to recognise that some of the guests who use the Winter Shelter will have complex problems which this scheme and its volunteers are not set up to deal with.

Although we may want to, we cannot solve people's problems.

We are here to provide simple hospitality and basic facilities and, on top of this, **the most valuable thing we can do is simply to listen to people.**

Where possible, guests will be helped to engage with the appropriate agencies and organisations that can help them sort out their problems on a longer-term basis, so please, do not try to take on too much. If you feel that you are getting into conversations that you cannot deal with, please let the Team Leader, Support Worker or Project Manager know.

The Support Worker, in particular, is in a better position to engage more deeply with guest issues and outside agencies, or our Mentoring & Befriending groups.

Under no circumstances should you feel obligated to do anything asked of you by a guest, nor should you put yourself in a situation where you are agreeing to keep secrets that you are not comfortable with (see also Confidentiality and Personal Safety).

## What is Required of Volunteers and Staff?

- A heart for the vulnerable, poor and needy and a willingness to be challenged and changed. Experience in working face to face with people.
- Some knowledge and sensitivity to issues relating to homelessness, including mental health issues, awareness of drug and alcohol abuse, statutory homelessness criteria and conflict resolution (provided during training).
- Familiarity and ability to work within TWCWS policies and guidelines, especially regarding Health & Safety procedures.
- Ability to respond calmly but quickly in an emergency. Sound judgement regarding when to ask for help.
- Basic knowledge of the building, especially the location of fire exits.
- Willingness to follow instructions from the Team Leader, and to work as part of a team adhering to the aforementioned project policies and guidelines.
- Knowledge of basic first aid would be useful.

## Guidelines for All Volunteers: Roles and Responsibilities

**The following brief descriptions are to give you a broad overview of the main roles and responsibilities during the weeks the shelter is operating. A lot of it is common sense so please don't be put off by all the detail – some people find it helpful – and please do bear in mind that the descriptions are by no means exhaustive!**

**You are responsible to:**

- Team Leader
- Church Co-ordinator and host church
- Project Manager, Support Worker and Management Committee.

**You are responsible for:**



- Our guests, who are our number one priority.
- The safety and smooth running of the shelter.
- Making a key contribution to the safe, warm and happy environment of the project.
- Your colleagues, as well as yourself.

#### **At all times:**

- Try to be on time.
- There should be at least four volunteers in the Shelter at all times. Guests and volunteers should be known by first names.
- Be alert to risks and communicate these to the Team Leader.
- Make sure you know the hall layout, especially the emergency exits, and any areas that are out of bounds to guests.
- Treat guests with respect and dignity in the face of our shortcomings and failings. Acknowledge the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely. It is inappropriate to impose our Christian faith, or any other faith or beliefs, or lack thereof on others, particularly when they may be vulnerable.
- Be friendly and make guests feel welcome, but be firm and consistent around rules and boundaries.
- Work as a team and support your Team Leader. Please do not challenge their decisions in front of other volunteers or guests.
- When speaking to guests it is best not to make promises; people can feel very let down by a promise not kept. Our work needs to build trust in order to be effective in finding appropriate help for guests. Broken promises can undermine this work.
- There may be issues around particular venues which the Project Manager, Church Co-ordinator or Team Leader will communicate and which will be written down in the Reference File at the church.
- Be yourself and enjoy the experience!

### **Church Co-ordinator Role**

The Church Co-ordinator is usually at the night shelter at the start of the evening his or her particular church is being used to accommodate overnight guests. He or she may also be the team leader of a shift.

Church Co-ordinators have responsibility for managing the human and physical resources of the shelter at their church. You will be called upon to make decisions as to the most appropriate course of action, and you may wish to make these in consultation with the Team Leader who may be more familiar with the guests. However, no list of policies and procedures can possibly cover every situation, and sometimes you will have to think on your feet.

#### **The Church Co-ordinator is responsible for:**

- Opening the church; keeping an eye on supplies to ensure that staple provisions are on site for a steady stream of tea and coffee; arrange any extra cleaning required and assist with daytime logistics, such as moving of beds and other equipment.
- Supporting and being a point of reference for the team of volunteers at his or her venue.
- If required, acting as a conduit of communication between project management and frontline shelter activities.

### **Team Leader Role**

Team leaders who are not at the set-up of the shelter or leave before the sleep over must

give this responsibility to someone else when they are not present. **THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A TEAM LEADER WHEN THE SHELTER IS OPERATING.** Team Leaders will be given a copy of the rota indicating names and contact numbers of volunteers on their shift as well as expected and authorised Guests and visitors.

#### He or she is responsible for:

- His or her team of volunteers and the guests during that shift.
- Carrying out a fire safety checklist at the venue before opening in the evening.
- Introducing volunteers to one another and ensuring that everybody knows who is a volunteer and their names.
- Identifying any First-Aiders.
- “Buddy-ing up” new volunteers with a more experienced volunteer.
- Briefing volunteers at the start of the shift including a time of prayer or bible study.
- Allotting tasks to volunteers e.g. serving tea, serving meals, putting out tables and beds, showing guests round the shelter, etc.
- Taking key decisions when other volunteers are unsure of the best course of action. Supporting volunteers where necessary in responding to guests.
- Working with volunteers to ensure the setting up and clearing up of the shelter. Overseeing the serving of refreshments.
- Spending time with guests, listening and responding to the needs of guests, offering general social support whilst within the project.
- Encouraging guests to make contact with other accommodation and service providers; via Support Worker commonly.
- Ongoing monitoring of all areas in the project in accordance with our policies and procedures. Responsible for any keys and the Winter Shelter Reference File.
- Liaison with the Church Co-ordinator & Project Manager.

#### The Evening Shift Volunteers (6.30 pm – 10 pm):

- Set up venue. Check toilets & supplies. Attend briefing before opening.
- Team Leader should be on the door with a 2nd volunteer.
- Welcome each guest as they arrive, booking in the guests in accordance with our policies and procedures, and risk assessing with regard to behaviour.
- Be aware, **there is a legal duty to inform police & social services if anyone who is (or looks likely to be) under 18 turns up at the Shelter and claims to be homeless.**
- If it's a guest's first night in the shelter scheme they will need to be briefed on Shelter Rules and reminded they have signed a Guest Agreement to comply with them.
- Confirm guests have a copy of the schedule and locations of the night shelter venues. Provide if not.
- When you answer the door, always ask guests to give you their names (i.e. don't ask “Are you Dave?”)
- Once things have settled down you will be keeping an eye on things but you should have plenty of opportunity to chat to guests and volunteers.
- Help serve the evening meal. Volunteers eat with guests.
- After the meal, some may help with tidying, clearing up (only volunteers allowed in the kitchen). This is a good time to chat to guests, play games, relax.
- Make a plan of who's sleeping where and enter on back of bed list.

#### Catering (evenings and mornings):

- Before the winter shelter opens, please familiarise yourself with our Food Manual and food hygiene guidance.
- Set up for serving teas and coffees when guests enter the shelter.
- Prepare and provide a hot meal for guests and evening volunteers (generally 20 people).

- Prepare and provide a basic breakfast of tea/coffee, toast and cereal for guests.
- To always be sensitive to food needs of guests if possible – intolerances, halal, vegan, etc. If cooking a meat based dish, it is a good idea to prepare at least 2 or 3 portions of a vegetarian option.
- Ensure the kitchen is used in line with our fire safety risk assessment.
- Ensure the kitchen and serving areas are clean, and cleaned, before, during and after the meal is cleared away (with due attention to our procedures on health and safety).
- Report the evenings' menu to the Project Manager.

### **The Night Shift Volunteers (9.45 pm - 7 am):**

- Briefing from Team Leader & prayer.
- Introduce themselves to any guests that are still awake.
- The Team Leader must secure the building after evening shift volunteers have left.
- From 10.30pm onwards, two volunteers may go to sleep. Swap over at about 2.30am. Sleeping volunteers are on call in case of an emergency.
- Waking volunteers, make yourselves comfortable with tea and coffee making facilities to hand! You may find that everyone is asleep by 11pm, but some people may want to sit up and talk quietly.
- The sleeping area should be checked every 15 minutes. Toilets should be checked regularly as appropriate.
- We recognise that there may be instances after the doors are locked when a guest may want to go outside for a cigarette. *This may mean that a volunteer is alone with that person.* The volunteer should only agree to accompany a guest if they are comfortable doing this and they must carry a panic alarm. The guest must remain near the door and in sight at all times or forfeit their place in the shelter. A volunteer should only accompany one guest at a time.
- If any guest wishes to leave the shelter before 8 am, it is important to remind them that they will not be able to re-enter and must therefore take all their personal belongings with them.
- Sleeping area lights-on at 7am. Do NOT wake by touching / shaking guests.

### **The Morning Shift Volunteers (7 am – 8.30 am):**

- Offer tea/coffee.
- Ensure that everyone is awake by 7am. Encourage guests to clear up their own bed space and put their own bedding in the laundry bag.
- Serve breakfast.
- Clear up, pack up all shelter kit and place in pre-agreed loading area for collection / assist “bed mover” to load car.
- Once guests have left the building, a thorough check must be done. The venue must be cleaned in readiness for church use.
- **Team Leader:**
  - Ensure that the Venue folder has been updated and passed on to next shelter staff.
  - “Reply to all” Team Leader’s email with details of any incidents or actions from the night, together with a record of those guests wishing to come in again, and any appointments discovered.

## TWC Winter Shelter Daily Timetable

### Evening Shift

- Before 5pm** Support Worker / PM will email Team Leader nightly Guest Bed List and any briefing notes required. TL to print and take copy to venue.
- 6.15pm** Church Co-ordinator and Team Leader arrive at the church and check documentation for any guests who may need additional support.
- 6.30 pm** First shift of volunteers arrive at the church venue. Volunteers start preparing the evening meal, the bedding area, the dining space and entertainment. Check toilets for cleanliness, soap and towels.
- 7pm** Team Leader goes through Health & Safety procedures and guidelines with any new volunteers. Check they have read the Volunteer Handbook.
- 7.15pm** The whole team should get together for briefing. A good time to introduce new volunteers. Check that everyone knows the fire drill. Team Leader to pass on any concerns from the previous night. Jobs to be allotted to volunteers. Time of prayer or bible study.
- 7.30pm** Guests start arriving. Team Leader checks names against the Bed List and welcomes new guests. New guests are shown around by volunteers and guests offered tea and coffee over the course of the evening. **If anyone arrives who is Under-18, be aware that there is a legal duty to inform police & social services. NO-ONE not on bed list, or otherwise previously informed to Team Leader to be admitted.** Take in & label any alcohol that guests wish to hand in until the following morning.
- 8.00pm** Guests and volunteers sit down to eat evening meal.
- 8.30pm** If guests from the Bed List don't turn up then any spare places may be offered to those on the waiting list – BUT NO-ONE ELSE.
- 9.00pm** Dinner is over and dishes cleared and washed. Guests chat, read, watch TV, take part in social activities (eg; cards, draughts, jigsaws, dominoes), or turn in. Team Leader updates Log Book as appropriate.

### Night Shift

- 9.45pm** Night Shift volunteers arrive (half sleeping/half waking shift). Briefing from Team Leader. Evening Shift volunteers leave at 10pm. (Team Leader responsible for securing building).
- 10.30pm** Guests in bed and lights out (timing is flexible and lights out may be 10.00pm onwards with the consent of guests).
- 11pm–7am** Volunteers take it in turns to be awake on duty throughout the night. Swap over 2/3am.

## Morning Shift

- 6.30am** Guests may begin to wake early and to use washing facilities.
- 7.00am** Morning Shift volunteers arrive with breakfast items. Handover from previous Team Leader if needed.  
Lights on & all guests woken by calling gently. Offer tea/coffee.
- 7.15-7.30am** Breakfast served. Volunteers start to clear up and pack away bedding (it is advised that you wear gloves when handling used bedding). Guests can be encouraged to clear up their own bedding. Return any personal items. Guests may confirm a shelter place for following evening in the next church shelter or receive reminders of appointments. Gently encourage any remaining guests to gather belongings so that you aren't rushing when closing.
- 8.00am** All guests to have left the building.
- 8.30am** Ensure Venue Folder has been updated and passed onwards with beds. Take bedding away for laundering. Secure the building.

**Before Bed!** Team Leader to complete group email report

## Volunteer Induction & Training

Induction and training has been delivered during October and November by staff in conjunction with partner agencies.

This year, training included:

- An introduction to the role and responsibilities of volunteers and to the shelter timetable
- What makes us Safe? Health & Safety; Personal Boundaries; How to welcome people and own the space - and how not to
- Dealing with Conflict.

## Engagement with Guests

*It can be difficult to relate to someone who is mentally ill, or drunk, or on drugs. The best advice is to: "Be yourself – but think before you speak". Many of the people we meet are desperately lonely– **just listening to them may be the most useful thing you can do and the thing they value most.** Listening well allows our guests to feel they have been met or known as people in their own right.*

*It is useful to familiarise yourself with other agencies and venues which work with the homeless in the area (see Winter Shelter Reference File) – this will make you more effective in helping guests in an emergency.*

Before starting a conversation, put yourself in our guest's shoes and give some thought to whether this is the right time. Have they literally only just got through the door? Are they on their way to clean their teeth? There may be times when guests are more relaxed and these can be better times to talk. Volunteers are encouraged to sit and eat meals with guests and this is a good time to strike up a conversation.

It may be easier to start a conversation with someone who's standing, as it's easier to end conversations when we're standing and people generally feel less trapped.

Be aware of the importance of guests' personal space and try not to intrude by getting too close to them physically. It may be better to sit or stand at a slight angle to the guest rather

than immediately in front, so you're not forcing eye contact.

Talk to people normally: the homeless may have more complex problems than you or I, but they have similar interests and concerns.

Always talk to people sensitively and listen when someone is talking to you. If you don't understand what they've said, tell them so politely rather than giving some glib or non-committal answer.

Practice being an active listener rather than a talker – you should aim to draw people out and understand them before you start making suggestions.

Summarising your understanding of what someone has said can illustrate that you are really listening and can help to take the conversation forward.

Sometimes guests will share very personal information. If so, don't feel you need to do anything other than listen. Don't feel obliged to cheer them up, as that can feel like a denial of how they are feeling. Just be present with people and hear what they have to say.

We've all experienced people who button-hole you and won't stop talking! If you need to end a conversation with a guest, warn the individual of the fact: "I'm going to have to go in a minute" allows them to get used to the idea. Then you could thank them for taking the time to speak with you, or offer the possibility of a conversation next time you meet at the shelter. Be firm but polite.

Anticipate: be sensitive to a 'bad atmosphere' and/or an individual whose body language spells trouble and either be particularly conciliatory or walk away.

Get to know first names: we all appreciate being recognised and you may have more respect from people and more support in case of an incident.

Avoid having a rational argument with someone who is clearly irrational: people who are drunk and/or on drugs can be unpredictable - the less said, the better. Be careful not to be drawn into conversations that may become heated.

Try not to take abuse personally: if someone takes out some of their anger and frustration on you, don't feel you must return it or defend your dignity.

Don't say "*I know how you feel*" or "*I understand*" - you can't possibly, and the guest is likely to feel annoyed and unheard.

If you don't know the answer to a question or the solution to a problem, never try to bluff your way out – be honest enough to say "*I don't know the answer, but I'll try my best to find out and give you an answer next time.*"

Think before you make any rash promises: never make promises unless you are able to fulfil them - people may never forgive you for a broken promise (and remember, what seemed minor to you could have been terribly important to them).

## Confidentiality

When talking with guests it is important not to push for information. Please recognise that some guests may feel hurt or let down by some experiences and may not wish to talk about them. Others will like nothing better than to tell you their story.

Please respect guest's confidentiality and don't allow your conversation to become common gossip either with other guests or outside the shelter environment. (Beware "coffee shop" conversations can be overheard!)

The right to confidentiality is essential to ensure that our guests have trust and confidence in the operation of the TWCWS and are treated with respect and dignity: however, it is not about keeping secrets and this should be made clear to guests. You may keep any conversation in confidence so long as you do not feel burdened or uncomfortable about what

has been shared.

If things feel as though they are getting too demanding tell the guest that you may have to tell your Team Leader what is being said in order to get appropriate help. It is then up to the guest as to whether they want to continue.

If you feel there is a threat of self-harm, a threat to another person or to the safety of the Shelter you should tell your Team Leader immediately.

If appropriate – pass details to Support Worker or Project Manager of anything which may influence plans to assist guest's "move-on" options; both good and bad and bearing in mind our -

### **(TWCWS) Confidentiality Policy statement:**

As people offering support to individuals who use this Service, we will be privileged to know personal information. This is a relationship of trust, which needs to be respected. Information gained about people must be treated as being confidential.

Confidentiality is maintaining the security of information obtained from or about an individual, which has been gained through a professional/working relationship. This information can only be shared in restricted circumstances such as when there is a legal compulsion or it is required to ensure the well-being of the person.

Some information will need to be shared with people/agencies who directly contribute to the provision of services within TWCWS and who are themselves bound by the principles of confidentiality. Personal information should be defined as information any person would consider to be private.

***Volunteers are advised to familiarise themselves with the full version of TWCWS's Policy on Confidentiality which is contained within the Winter Shelter Reference File and is available by contacting the Project Manager.***

## **Guidelines for the Prevention of Violence**

Over the years many churches across the country have successfully operated Winter Shelters. This guidance is informed by their experience and that of Tunbridge Wells Street Teams. Violent incidents are few and far between. With that in mind, however, it is important to recognise that actual or potential violence **may** be a problem in working with this vulnerable client group. The following guidelines were issued by the London Rough Sleepers Unit, are used by Shelter, Crisis and CARIS Islington Churches Winter Shelter, and are intended to offer direction on the most effective ways of preventing violent behaviour and protection from its consequences.

The Health and Safety Statement included in this pack acknowledges the responsibility of the TWCWS Management Committee and various churches to provide training, direction and support to volunteers; in addition, all volunteers have an individual responsibility never to put themselves, their colleagues, guests or members of the public at unnecessary risk. These procedures should be viewed within the context of that shared responsibility.

### **Defining violence and aggression**

Although these guidelines focus on the extreme end of violent behaviour, this does not mean to imply that only physical assault is of concern. Threats and verbal abuse, for example, are also recognised for their intimidating and undermining impact and, where appropriate, these guidelines should apply to all forms of aggressive behaviour.

### **General guidelines for managing violence and aggression**

It is natural to be frightened of violence, and this needs to be taken into account in the

expectations of oneself or others when dealing with actual or potential violence or threatening behaviour. At the same time, volunteers should recognise that they have skills that can help to calm or diffuse a situation, such as speaking softly; asking open questions to try and find out what the individual is angry about; using active listening techniques to show the person that you are listening and trying to help; using open body language and hand gestures to indicate that you are not scared (even if you are!); ignoring insults and swearing; allowing people to let off steam and trying to do something about the problem, coming up with a solution if you can.

In responding to violence or potential violence, one's own safety and that of colleagues and the guests must be seen as the first consideration.

Guidelines can never cover every eventuality. Volunteers must also draw on their experience, skills and common sense when faced with aggressive situations.

All volunteers should co-operate in taking a consistent approach to confronting guests about unacceptable behaviour and in banning or excluding guests from the building. As far as possible, one volunteer should not be identified as the instigator of a ban – these should be presented as team decisions, and all volunteers must actively support the decision even if they have a different opinion.

### **Managing a violent incident**

Anticipate! Volunteers should be sensitive to a 'bad atmosphere' and/or to a guest whose body language spells trouble and either be particularly conciliatory or allow the guest space to calm down.

It is the responsibility of all volunteers to alert colleagues at the first sign of aggression and to act co-operatively to diffuse the situation.

In case of an incident developing, one or two volunteers should talk to the guest/s concerned, remaining calm, but firm, and trying to create opportunities for the guest/s to back down without feeling humiliated. Where possible, the guest/s should be taken aside.

Other volunteers should remain at a reasonable distance but pay attention in case the situation escalates. Volunteers who are not directly involved with the main protagonists should attempt to keep other guests calm, and prevent them from becoming involved unless they are friends who can assist positively.

In particular, one volunteer should ensure that any vulnerable people are removed from the area and if possible, potential weapons such as plates, cutlery, etc should be removed from the area.

Space should be created to ensure that people are not crowded into a confined area. All those present should be mindful of their own and others "escape route" should it be necessary to get out of the way fast.

One worker should be in a position to 'phone for police assistance should this become necessary. It is useful to identify in advance (at the briefing session) which volunteer on your shift would have this responsibility should a situation arise.

If an incident escalates and the guest/s cannot be calmed, then volunteers should be prepared to vacate the area. Personal safety must be put before the protection of property. The police should be summoned immediately.

In exceptional circumstances, if retreat is not possible, volunteers should take appropriate measures to defend themselves. In the extremely unlikely event of an attack, only force sufficient to stop the attacker and prevent injury to self, colleagues or other guests should be used: reasonable restraint is acceptable.



## After an incident has occurred

If an incident does occur, it is likely to be very unsettling for everyone involved in the project, whether volunteer or guest. Some things that can be done include:

- Providing first aid where necessary
- Providing reassurance and helping everyone to calm down
- Recording details of the incident as quickly as possible in the log file
- Arranging for any volunteer that has been scared or hurt to leave the shift
- Arranging longer term support where necessary
- Discuss the incident and try and draw out constructive lessons for avoiding a similar incident in the future
- Consider providing other guests with brief details of what happened and how it was dealt with:
  - this is to prevent rumours and provide reassurance that incidents are dealt with effectively.

## Drug and Alcohol Guidelines

The following guidelines are adapted from those used by the Crisis at Christmas winter shelters.

### Use of drugs and alcohol

- Guests arriving at the shelter judged to be in an unmanageable state (possibly intoxicated) should not be allowed entry (a copy of the Rules and Guest Agreement, signed by all guests, can be found in the Shelter Reference File).
- Drugs or alcohol must not be consumed/used on or close to the premises by any guest or volunteer.
- We can look after bottles or tins for guests. These should be clearly labelled with the guest's name.
- Volunteers will be turned away if suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs when coming onto their shift and may be suspended from future duties.

### Action to be taken if guidelines are breached

- If guests are found drinking on or close to the premises they will be asked to leave the shelter. This can be done that evening by the Team Leader at their discretion.
  - It may be more disruptive to remove a person from the church that night, depending on what kind of state they are in at that time.
  - Or, if they must be excluded you may need to phone the police to warn them.
- If guests are found taking drugs on the premises or dealing drugs they WILL be asked to leave the shelter immediately (call emergency services if necessary).
- If suspected that someone is violating these policies it must be recorded in the Incident Log and Team Leaders e-mail. This way volunteers the following night can be aware.
  - Volunteers should not "police" a night shelter but neither should they be negligent.

### Communication of drug & alcohol guidelines

- The guidelines are contained in the Guest Agreement and explained to guests by the project staff, and agreed in writing by guests at the point of acceptance.

- Guests will be reminded of the guidelines on entering the shelter.
- Volunteers should be informed of the guidelines at briefing meetings and details of the guidelines are included in information given to volunteers.
- If anyone is excluded from the Shelter as a result of breaching the guidelines, the Project Manager and all Team Leaders should be informed. In particular, the church responsible for the following night must be informed.

## Emergency Procedures

The definition of an emergency is largely down to your common sense, but it might include: Fire, violent incident, aggressive behaviour, self-harm, overdose, power failure...

Do not hesitate to call emergency services if you feel the situation merits it.

### In the Event of Fire:

- Raise the alarm by informing the Team Leader.
- Calmly raise the alarm with all guests and staff using loud, clear but calm voice.
- Team Leader will instruct Volunteer to dial 999 and request fire service; advising them of the location and the nature of incident. Venue folder includes full location postcodes and directions to each venue.
- Evacuate the building via marked fire exits (specific instructions are in Reference File at each venue).
- Team Leader or volunteer will check toilets and corridor as well as main areas.
- Team leader to carry Venue Folder containing Guest Bed lists and Volunteer Sign-in/out sheets and procedures to outside assembly area.
- Assemble in agreed area (specific to venue) with at least 2 staff members present.
- Shift leader (or other) checks all staff and guests are present, against sign-in sheets.
- If fire is minimal extinguish with fire blanket or appropriate extinguisher but DO NOT place yourself at risk.
- Wait for fire service.

### Self-harm / mental health crisis:

- Remain calm and speak slowly and clearly
- Allow the person concerned physical space – reduce the number of people nearby, don't touch the person
- Allow the person space to talk – silence is OK. Don't bombard them with questions or suggestions
- If situation seems dangerous or acute, suggest to the guest that further help is needed
- If guest presents as in a mental health crisis and suicide is threatened, advise guest that you will contact the mental health team, (phone numbers are in venue folder.)
- Mental health assessment needed? Contact mental health team (phone number is in the venue folder)
- Immediate danger to the person concerned or to others? Contact police
- For less serious situations advise guest of availability of Samaritans (phone number in folder).

## Health & Safety Policy Statement

This policy is to provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for both volunteers taking part in and guests using the Winter Shelter Scheme.

### Objectives

So far as is practicable, and as far as they are able, the Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter management committee undertakes:

- To provide a working environment that is healthy and safe with satisfactory amenities.
- To ensure, that health & safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice are observed. To support and maintain through the participating Churches, safe premises and equipment including appropriate protective clothing.
- To ensure that the use, handling, storage and transportation of food, articles and substances are safe.
- To ensure that the systems of work are safe and to provide or locate appropriate training and advice for volunteers in these matters.
- To promote effective communication between the Shelter Management Committee, staff, volunteers and guests on safety matters in each church.
- To ensure, that all staff, volunteers, guests and visitors using the premises are safe and without risk to their health.
- To review and revise this policy annually or as new legislation requires.

### Personal Safety Do's and Don'ts for Volunteers

In order to promote the safety of all guests, volunteers, staff and visitors in the Tunbridge Wells Winter Shelter, please familiarise yourself with the section on Personal Boundaries and always observe the following rules:

- Check the identity of each guest arriving at the door by asking for their name first.
- Do not let any guest into the building whose name is not already on the bed list or without consulting the Team Leader first.
- Never give your home 'phone number or address to a guest, or invite a guest into your home.
- Avoid being alone with a guest, especially one of the opposite sex - allegations can easily be made and they are difficult to deal with.
- Leave your valuables in the safe keeping of the Team Leader or, preferably, leave them at home.
- Do not give money to guests – if you are concerned about their situation, refer them to the Project Manager / Support Worker or to local agencies identified in the Winter Shelter Reference File.
- Do not touch guests to wake them up.
- Wear gloves when handling used bedding.
- When dealing with lost property, never put your hand into a bag or pocket. Please tip contents onto a flat surface so you can see what you are handling. This will help to prevent any potential injury.
- Volunteers should act safely and not put themselves or other volunteers or guests in any danger. If you feel intimidated at any time during the shift, inform the Team Leader. Please take directions at all times from them, especially with regard to matters of personal safety.

## Basic Hygiene Precautions

### General

- Protective equipment and cleaning kits are in the venue boxes.
- Do not attempt to clean any bodily fluids etc. unless authorised by the Team Leader. Make the area safe first. Must be cleared/ disposed of using appropriate personal protective equipment and body fluid disposal kit.
- If there are any first aid requirements; inform shift Team Leader in parallel with taking immediate steps as necessary.
- Toilets to be checked ½ hourly and cleaned if necessary. Toilet hand towels replaced if needed.
- Personal hand towel (and shower towel if in venue) are available conspicuously for all guests – change if requested
- For cleaning and laundry use gloves at all times
- GLOVES & CLOTHS ETC USED IN THE TOILETS SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN THE KITCHEN & VICE VERSA
- Please do not leave something for somebody else to do; if you see that something needs doing - do it or report it.

### Food Safety

Some basic guidelines for all volunteers to follow are;

- Hang up all outside coats/jackets on pegs in corridor – keep valuables in secure. Tie hair back
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food – wash hands when you re-enter the kitchen from other areas (unless ONLY serving to table)
- Wear a CLEAN apron
- Use anti-bacterial spray to wipe work surfaces prior to usage
- No guests in the kitchen at any time
- Be careful of space in the kitchen when moving hot items/ liquids – be aware of who is around you
- Be aware of risks of contamination from hands and coughing/sneezing
- Do not prepare food or work in kitchen if you have sickness or diarrhoea; be clear of both for 48 hours before working again
- Cover food, monitor it!
- Use the disposable cloths that are provided
- Keep the kitchen and serving areas tidy
- Wash up using the anti-bacterial washing up liquid and rinse in 2nd sink (or bowl) with very hot water or warm water and Milton fluid
- Where possible on hobs, use the rear rings only to reduce fire/burn risk
- Change wet/dirty hand towels on a regular basis
- Do not store and save food from previous sessions
- Use only the designated kitchen mop and bucket. TOILET AND KITCHEN MOPS/BUCKETS ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE!

### Guests' Bathing

Many guests like to bathe their feet. Following the Folkestone Churches' Winter Shelter's advice, we will be observing the following procedure:

- Use plastic bowls found with Venue Boxes. Do NOT use these for washing up!
- ½ fill with warm water and give to guest with towel.
- Once guest has finished – empty contents into sink in toilets (or into toilet – NOT kitchen

- sink or hand basin).
- Fill bowl with warm water and add some sterilising solution (2 caps full). Leave to soak for 20 minutes.
- Empty into toilet sink and rinse out. Place used towel in laundry bag.
- THIS MUST OCCUR BETWEEN EVERY GUEST AND AFTER FINAL USE!!!!

## TWCWS Policies & Procedures

Safeguarding Adults  
 Health and Safety  
 Alcohol & Drug  
 Confidentiality  
 Volunteer Handbook  
 Violence  
 Risk Assessment & Guidelines  
 Lone Working  
 Exclusions & Bans  
 Referral  
 Food Hygiene  
 Incident Log  
 Venue Risk Assessments  
 Registration & Referral forms  
 Guest Rules  
 Guest welcome form  
 Venue schedule & location info  
 Team Leader schedule and checks  
 CCTV Radio Reporting  
 Emergency Contact info & Shelter mobile  
 Volunteer Expense Form template

Policies can be emailed to volunteers on request. A Reference Folder which contains a complete set of our policies is moved with the beds.

## Finally!

Thank you for reading this Volunteer Handbook. We hope that it has gone some way to answering questions or concerns you may have had and we pray that your experience in the shelter will be rewarding.

If you have further queries, please don't hesitate to contact Wendy Hogg (Project Manager) by emailing [office.twcws@gmail.com](mailto:office.twcws@gmail.com) or calling 07513 377951.