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| **WINTER NIGHT SHELTER** |
| **Volunteer Handbook 2025** |

A group of people putting their hands together

Description automatically generated***CONTENTS***



Welcome to the Team 2

Roles and Responsibilities 3

Volunteers 3

Rules for Guests 7

Timetable of Shifts 8

Parking and Building 10

Health and Safety Statement 12

Food Hygiene and Kitchen Safety 13

Fire Instructions 14

Procedures for Prevention of Violence 14

Personal Safety 17

Drug and Alcohol Information/Procedure 18

**WELCOME TO THE TEAM**



Thank you for volunteering to work in our Winter Night Shelter.

We hope that your experience of volunteering this winter will be rewarding and that our Shelter will be safe and welcoming for those who use it, whether as guests, volunteers or visitors.

Background and Context

It is good to recognise that some of the guests who will use the venue might have complex problems, which this scheme and its volunteers are not set up to deal with. Although we may want to, we cannot solve all people’s problems. We are here to provide basic facilities and, on top of this, the most valuable thing we can do is simply to listen and care.

Where possible, guests will be helped to get in touch with the right 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 record this in the Log-Book and let your Shift Leader know.

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 Respect and Confidentiality)

General

The Night Shelter will operate during from January to March 2025.

The address is: 19-21 Thames Street KT1 1PH

We will be offering a place to sleep for up to 30 guests per night. Please note the venue is upstairs.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILTIES**



Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness has been overseeing the running of winter night shelters since 2009.

***Winter Night Shelter Coordinator:***

There is a full time **Winter Night Shelter Coordinator** whose job it is to oversee the smooth running of the shelter.

***Night Shelter Support Workers:***

We are employing 2 full time Night Shelter Support workers whose job it will be to lead the shifts at the shelter. They will manage referrals and guest list. They will also ensure all tasks are distributed among the team and make any decisions required on the night.

These workers will be referred to as Shift Leaders through the rest of this document.

**VOLUNTEERS**



***What is required of Volunteers?***

* Experience in working face to face with people.
* Some knowledge and sensitivity to issues relating to homelessness, including mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse. (Free online course:)
* Ability to respond calmly but quickly in an emergency.
* Judgement of when to call for help.
* Basic knowledge of the building, especially the location of fire exits.
* Willingness to follow instructions from the Shift Leader, and work as part of a team.
* Knowledge of basic first aid would be useful, although we are not allowed to administer any medication.

**General Guidelines & Boundaries**

* Be on time for your shift.
* Make sure you know the venue layout, especially the emergency exits, and any areas that are out of bounds to guests.
* Treat all guests with respect.
* Be friendly and make guests feel welcome.
* Work as a team and support your Shift Leader. Do not challenge their decisions in front of other volunteers or guests.
* Guests and volunteers should be known by first names only. Please wear name badges and the lanyard provided at all times.
* Please do not give or lend money to guests.
* Do not give out personal information especially address, telephone number or e-mail address or accept any social media requests.
* Arrangements should never be made to meet with guests outside the Shelter unless it is an activity arranged by the Winter Night Shelter.
* 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.
* When speaking to guests, it is best not to make promises. People can feel very let down by a promise not kept. Our Shelter needs to build trust to be effective in finding appropriate help for guests. Broken promises can undermine this work.
* 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.
* Be aware of your body language and physical contact with guests.
* Do not engage with sexual innuendo or allow sexually explicit conversations.
* Keep private the affairs of other volunteers.
* Do not discuss personal facts about one service user with another.
* Say NO when behaviour is unacceptable. If possible, let the guest know why it is not acceptable, and communicate your feelings to a member of the team.
* Do not impose your views or personal beliefs on a guest but respect their point of view.

**Being with guests**

* Sit with, rather than stand over guests.
* In conversation, use open-ended questions e.g. “What did you think of this evening’s meal?”. Avoid closed questions e.g. “Did you enjoy your meal?”.
* Avoid direct personal questions – please do not delve into someone’s past or present situation.
* Avoid discussing in depth details of your own life - provide company rather than personal chat.
* Accept our guests as they are - avoid comments, suggestions, and solutions to their situations. However, do signpost them on to other relevant services who may be able to help.
* Respect silence – don’t always try to fill it up.
* Be sensitive to clues that the person has finished speaking. When it’s time to go, have an excuse ready.
* Accept their thanks for your company and help.
* Be careful not to get bogged down in someone’s problems – consult with other team members and don’t take a burden away with you.
* Do not agree to promises or confidences which might prove difficult for you to keep.
* Try not to become upset or emotional if the guest does.
* Do not return an aggressive/angry comment, keep calm and try to find out what the issue is.
* Do not touch the guest to wake them up. Just gently say their name.

Always talk to your Shift Leader about any concerns or issues you may have whilst volunteering at KCAH Winter Night Shelter.

Confidentiality

When talking to guests it is important not to push for information. Please acknowledge that some guests may feel hurt or let down by some past 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 by not discussing any guest's personal details with any other guests.

Confidentiality is important for building trust. However, it is not about keeping secrets and this should be made clear to guests. You may keep a 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 coordinator 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 that a guest is at serious risk to themselves, a threat to another person or to the safety of the Shelter you should tell your Shift Leader immediately.

Please do not discuss guests details with anyone outside of the Shelter Team.

**Gifts**

DECLARE & SHARE!

From time to time guests may wish to give gifts to staff or volunteers. Small gifts may be accepted, particularly if they can be shared amongst the other guests and volunteers. The general rule is that all gifts should be shared with the team and the guest should be told that this is the policy. **In all cases, gifts should be reported to the Winter Night Shelter Coordinator and recorded in the log book**. Any gift deemed to be too expensive or in some way inappropriate should be politely returned to the guest.

**RULES FOR GUESTS**

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

1. No alcohol or drugs to be brought into the venue or consumed in or around the premises. Random bag checks will be carried out.
2. No violent, threatening, racist or other anti-social behaviour or language is allowed.
3. No smoking inside the venues.
4. Only those who have been allocated a space at the Shelter will be allowed into the venue. Please do not bring anyone else with you as you will be at risk of losing your own place.
5. Guests must arrive and be signed in each evening between 7:30pm and 10.00pm (Monday to Sunday) They may not be allowed in after this time and could risk losing their place at the shelter. If they DO NOT want a place for the following night, they must let us know during breakfast time. Also if they arrive late we may not be able to offer the guest a hot meal.
6. Guests must be respectful of the local neighbourhood and its residents and community.
7. Pets might be allowed but each case will be assessed individually.
8. The Shelter is only for those aged 18 years old and above.
9. No sex allowed in the shelter.
10. Compliance with the Night Shelter Health and Safety

We operate a 3-strike policy and three rule breaks will result in you losing your place within the Shelter. Any major rule break, such as aggressive or violent behaviour will result in immediate expulsion from the Shelter.

***TIMETABLE OF SHIFTS*** 

**Evening Shift: 7:00pm–2.00am Monday to Sunday**

***Set Up***

* Arrive at venue and report to the Shift Leader
* Put the rubbish outside of the building ready for collection.
* Check toilets are clean and have toilet rolls, hand soap and towels.
* Check the security of premises. The front door is to be always locked, only opened when the doorbell sounds.
* The Shift Leader will check the Night Shelter logbook. Any relevant information should be shared with the team at the briefing session. The Night Support Worker will also ensure at this point that the volunteers have completed their online training and have signed their volunteer agreement.
* WhatsApp messages received concerning that evening’s night shelter will be noted in the logbook as a written record.
* The Shift Leader will pass on any concerns or important information from the previous night.
* The shift leader will distribute tasks within the team.
* Check for essential supplies for example coffee and milk
* Begin to prepare for dinner.

***During evening Shift*:**

* Shift Leader will manage reception area to book guests in for the night.
* Show new guests around.
* Serve tea & coffee over the course of the evening.
* Serve the hot dinner
* Wash and tidy up after the meal. Please ensure that the waste goes into the correct bags for recycling
* Organise social activities for the guests e.g. games of chess, jigsaws, dominoes, TV, magazines, etc.

**11:00pm**

* Lights out. All guests should try to settle down to sleep and be quiet. The whole team will remain awake for the duration of their shift.

**Morning Shift: 2:00am – 7:30am Monday to Sunday**

* Prepare hot drinks and begin to get breakfast ready.
* Gently wake up guests with an offer of a hot drink.
* Serve breakfast.
* Encourage the guests to put their hygiene packs and other toiletries into their box next to their bed.
* Ensure guests leave premises by 7:00 am.
* Wash up and tidy up.
* Tidy up, leave bagged up rubbish for the evening collection downstairs in the reception area.
* Check the toilets are clean and that toilet roll is replenished and hand soap.
* Secure the building when you leave.

**PARKING**

* There is a car park available at the back of the building. It is a locked car park, and the Shift Leader will have the key to gain access. Either stop outside the venue or call the Team Leader with an ETA so they can give you the key.
* When parking you must allow a clear walk way with space for emergency exits for both the venue and Lakeland.
* Once you have parked your car, please ensure that you lock the gate behind you and give the key back to the Team Leader.

**BUILDING**

**You must be familiar with the building**.

Importantly you must:

* Know where the fire exits, and fire extinguishers are kept.
* Know where the first aid box, Night Shelter mobile phone and list of emergency numbers are and tell your volunteers where they are.
* Make sure that fire exits are unlocked and not blocked. Release the top and bottom bolts on the fire doors so the internal push bar will function.
* 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 know where guests can and cannot go.
* Identify a safe area where volunteers can leave their belongings.

**Welcoming guests**

* **DO NOT** let any of the guests in unless given specific authorisation to do so by your shift leader
* Welcome each guest as they arrive.
* If it is a guest’s first night in the Night Shelter, please take the time to make them feel welcomed and show them the building and explain what they can expect. Remember that some guests may not be able to read.
* When you answer the door, always ask guests to give you their names (i.e. don’t ask “Are you Dave?”)
* Sometimes people turn up at the door who are not booked in. Do not let them into the shelter as you will not know their background and will be putting other guests and your volunteers at risk. If this happens let your shift leader know immediately.
* 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.

***HEALTH & SAFETY STATEMENT***



KCAH Winter Night Shelter’s policy is to provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practical, safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for both volunteers taking part in and guests using the Winter Night Shelter and to provide such information, training and supervision as is needed for this purpose.

Each venue is responsible for the Public Liability Insurance of its own site.

**OBJECTIVES**

We undertake:

* 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 provide and maintain 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 ensure that all volunteers and guests using the premises are safe and without risk to their health
* To review and revise this policy annually or as new legislation requires

**Communication**

* Volunteers will be invited to join a WhatsApp Group run by the Winter Night Shelter Coordinator. The use of the WhatsApp group is only to convey messages in relation to the night shelter shifts. Any important messages should also be recorded in the logbook.
* No information about guests should be
* Any issues regarding your Three Rings account should be directed to [will.h@kcah.org.uk](mailto:will.h@kcah.org.uk)
* Any other communications regarding the Night Shelter email address and one of the team will get back to you winternightshelter@kcah.org.uk

**FOOD HYGIENE & KITCHEN SAFETY**



**Food preparation and reheating guidelines**

These are general points for all volunteers to be aware of:

**Preparation**

* Food should be thoroughly cooked to a core temperature of at least 70‟C and kept at that temperature for at least 2mins.

**Cooling**

* Cool food rapidly before putting in the refrigerator. Food should not stand around for more than 90mins at which time deterioration will begin. Food can be cooled quickly by standing in cold or iced water.

**Reheating**

* The practice of reheating should be avoided. However, if this is unavoidable, the food should be heated until it has reached a core temperature of at least 70‟C and held at that temperature for at least two minutes.

**Microwaves**

* If food is being cooked or heated in a microwave oven be especially careful to ensure that every part of the food is thoroughly heated. Microwaves often heat food unevenly, so you may need to stir and move the food around to ensure temperature consistency.

**Serving**

* Hot food must be served at a temperature of at least 63‟C

(Information from “The Food Safety Handbook‟ by Graham Aston)

**FIRE INSTRUCTIONS**

Volunteers need to be aware of the fire instructions for 19-21 Thames Street which are clearly displayed on the wall.

**PROCEDURES FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE**



The following guidelines were issued by the London Rough Sleepers Unit, are used by Shelter and Crisis 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 committee to provide 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 considered in the expectations of oneself or others when dealing with actual or potential violence or threatening behaviour.

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**

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.

One or two volunteers should talk to the individual/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.

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 able to call for police assistance should this become necessary. It may be useful to identify in advance 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 by calling **999**.

In exceptional circumstances, if retreat is not possible, volunteers should take appropriate measures to defend themselves. In the 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:

* Promote/provide first aid where necessary
* Provide reassurance and help everyone to calm down
* 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.

**PERSONAL SAFETY**



To promote safety in the Night Shelter sessions, always observe these rules:

* Check the identity of each guest arriving at the door by asking for their name
* Do not let any guest into the building whose name is not already in the logbook
* Never give your home, phone number or home address to a guest, or invite a guest into your home.
* Avoid being alone with a guest, especially one of the opposite sexes.
* Do not give money to guests – if you are concerned about their situation, refer them to the Winter Night Shelter Coordinator.
* Do not touch any guest, even to wake them up.
* Wear gloves when handling used bedding and administering first aid.
* When dealing with lost property, never put your hand into a bag or pocket. Tip contents onto a flat surface so you can see what you are handling.
* 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 Shift Leader/Winter Night Shelter Coordinator. Please always take directions from them, especially about matters of personal safety.

**DRUG & ALCOHOL INFORMATION/PROCEDURES**



The following general guidelines are adapted from those used by the Crisis at Christmas winter shelters. A copy of the drugs and alcohol policy is available on request.

**Use of drugs and alcohol**

* Drugs or alcohol must not be brought into any venue or consumed/used on the premises by any guest or volunteer.
* Anyone identified as physically dependent on substances will have a personalised, pre-agreed plan which the Shift Leader will be made aware of in advance.
* Volunteers should not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when coming onto their shift.

**Action to be taken if policy is breached**

* If guests are found drinking on the premises they will be asked to leave the shelter. It may be more disruptive to remove the person from the premises that night, depending on what kind of state they are in at that time.
* If guests are found taking drugs on the premises they will be asked to leave the shelter.
* Anyone found dealing drugs will be asked to leave the shelter.
* Use of the toilets should be monitored (especially if someone is spending more than about 10-15 minutes in there) in case they are using the toilet for alcohol or drug use.
* Volunteers who suspect that someone is violating these policies must make a note of this in the logbook. This way volunteers the following night can be aware. Volunteers should not police a Night Shelter but should not be negligent.

**ANYONE WHOSE BEHAVIOUR IS DISRUPTIVE TO THE SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE SHELTER DUE TO THEIR DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL USE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN OR REQUIRED TO LEAVE.**