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Volunteer Handbook

02 January 2024 – 02 April 2024

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A warm welcome

for homeless people & others in need during the winter

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to be part of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS).

MCWS is a registered Charitable Independent Organisation, number 1156735. The charity began in October 2013 and, as its name suggests, it runs during the winter months.

We aim to ensure that all our Shelters are safe and welcoming for those who use them, whether as guests, volunteers or staff. Please take some time to read this handbook carefully.

Winters 2013-14 to 2019-20 inclusive

From its inception in October 2013 up until March 2020 we provided hot meals, overnight accommodation (dormitory style), and a listening ear/support for homeless guests in church buildings, for 12-13 weeks each winter.

Our scheme ran on a rolling night shelter basis, meaning the load was shared between church venues and teams: we used seven different church venues, one for each night of the week.

During these years we were able to accommodate up to 15 guests per night. However, over the course of the Shelter the total number of people helped was far greater than this, as guests were housed or moved on and new guests took their place.

Winter 2020-21 (Covid pandemic)

In line with the Government's Covid guidance, we were unable to provide overnight shelter during the winter of 2020-21. However, we worked closely with Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), who provided temporary accommodation under the Government's 'Everyone In Scheme' to ensure everyone was kept off the streets.

During this winter we worked alongside MBC to provide continuing support to our local homeless community (all in rooms/temporary accommodation) by providing hot home-cooked takeaway meals and food packs for people who needed them. We also provided meals to individuals and families in need of food, who were suffering due to financial distress caused by the pandemic. Our meals were distributed from both The Salvation Army food banks and Union Street Methodist Church in order to reach the people most in need of support.

Winters 2021-22 & 2022-23

Whilst we were still under some Covid restrictions, things were a bit more 'normal' and we were able to provide sit-down hot meals and a listening ear/support for homeless guests and others in need, as in the earlier years of our activities. These sessions were held inside local church venues.

We also provided overnight support for homeless guests, but it was offered as individual rooms in a local hotel rather than dormitory-style in church halls. This was to adhere to the Government guidance for Winter Shelters, in order to continue keeping guests as safe from Covid as possible and to provide a more dignified manner of support.

Winter 2023-24

This winter we will provide a warm and welcoming environment for our guests each afternoon and evening, from 02 January 2024 until the morning of 02 April 2024.

Whilst accommodation remains at the forefront of the support we provide, our role has changed since MCWS first started and we have adapted to ensure the support offered meets the greatest need(s) in our community. Our Trustees recognise the fact that people continue to face an extremely difficult economic period, with the likelihood there will be many individuals who will struggle to pay rent, energy bills and increased food costs. These people are potentially the future homeless and our plans aim to try and prevent this from happening. Our revised focus for the coming winter and future years is therefore as follows:

1. **Accommodation** – will be offered if Maidstone Borough Council are unable to support homeless people, especially at short notice, or for those people with no recourse to public funds.

Our overnight accommodation will be offered from our church venues, as a dormitory style arrangement. This allows us to support more people, as the availability of hotel rooms is limited and costly.

2. **Meals & Hospitality** – Meals & Hospitality will be provided at both our afternoon and evening sessions. At the afternoon sessions we will offer hot drinks, snacks, a chat and support for our guests. Our evening sessions will offer hot meals, hospitality and support plus some social interaction.

These sessions will be extended to people who are homeless, those in temporary accommodation but with little or no cooking facilities, plus anyone genuinely in need of a hot meal and/or support.

3. **Support/Signposting** - This will involve staff and volunteers using their skills and knowledge to know when, how and where to signpost guests to other agencies if additional support is required; for example with medical advice, addictions, counselling etc.
4. **Prevention of homelessness** – this encompasses all our activities but can be expanded as needed. For people who are struggling to pay rent, heating bills and buy the basics such as essential food they are just one step away from becoming homeless. If we can help these people with basic necessities, advice and support to enable them to help themselves, hopefully additional homeless cases can be kept to a minimum. In the current economic climate, this is potentially a huge challenge.

MCWS Values & Aims

Our key values at MCWS are hospitality and kindness, and our aims are:

- ❖ Providing hospitality and overnight shelter for homeless people and others in financial distress over the winter months.
- ❖ Engaging members of churches in Maidstone and other volunteers in building supportive relationships with homeless people in Maidstone, without discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.
- ❖ Supporting homeless people to find long-term accommodation.
- ❖ Undertaking such other purposes in relation to the needs of homeless people as the trustees may from time to time determine.

SHELTER STRUCTURE

The day-to-day work of MCWS is undertaken by:

The Project Manager, Assistant Project Manager and Project Workers (Operations Team)

These are the people who liaise with external agencies, including MBC Outreach team, in order to assess and manage referrals to the Shelter.

The Project Manager, Claire Kehily, is responsible to the Trustees and this will be her second year in this role. Prior to becoming Project Manager, Claire was the Assistant Project Manager for 2 winters and was previously a volunteer, so she comes with plenty of experience in dealing with the individual and often complex needs of our guests. Claire's contact number is 07308 150048.

The Assistant Project Manager is Mike Louth. Mike also held this role last winter and, prior to working for the shelter, was an experienced volunteer. Mike will support Claire in order to ensure the shelter runs smoothly each day.

Both Claire & Mike work to a rota, to ensure at least one of them is available at the shelter at all times. They work closely with our small team of Project Worker(s) and with our volunteer teams, to ensure everything runs well and to deal with any issues that may arise.

Their contact details will be available in each Venue's information folder.

The Administrator

This is the person who manages the administration of the Shelter office and liaises with our volunteers, including preparing volunteer rotas. Our Administrator, Mandy Fuller, is responsible to the Project Manager and can be contacted on 01622 296450.

The Trustees

Our Trustees have overall responsibility for the running of the Shelter. They are also actively involved in supporting it.

Gordon Mackley - Chairman

Gordon is the Chairman of the Trustees. He retired from work in 2016, after a 43 year-long career in railway operational management and transport information systems. He is a Licensed Lay Reader in a Church of England church near Maidstone. Gordon served as a Street Pastor in Maidstone from the start of the scheme in October 2008 until Covid restrictions were first imposed in early 2020. He was a Team Leader for many years as well as the Maidstone Co-ordinator for a period. He became involved in Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter from the first year, serving as a volunteer.

Martin Hinchliffe – Operations

Martin has a strong desire to help others less fortunate than himself. He is saddened by regularly seeing the homeless on the streets of Maidstone, London and other cities and attempts to play his part in supporting and reducing the number of street homeless. He has previously volunteered for Crisis at Christmas in London and has volunteered for ten years with MCWS. He has been a Trustee of the charity for 7 years. He has experience in managing operations and safety management, following a career in engineering and is the lead Trustee for shelter operations.

Wendy Foster – Human Resources

Wendy has over 30 years' experience as a senior Human Resources practitioner, mainly in public sector and not-for-profit organisations, and is the lead Trustee for this specialism. She is an active Christian and has good links with local faith-based groups. In addition, Wendy is a Trustee for Citizens' Advice Maidstone, a role that led to her increased interest in support for the homeless in Maidstone.

Rev John Tapper – Treasurer

Rev Canon John is a Chartered Accountant and is the charity's Treasurer. John has assisted the Shelter both as an overnight volunteer and also collecting items for the guests

Zofia Grzymala – Partnership Support

Zofia is well known for her passion and dedication to helping homeless people and influencing change in the services provided. She has a substantial knowledge of the homeless and housing sector. Her professional experience includes managing Homeless Care charity (supported accommodation, day centre and food bank) as well as her roles within the Origin Group and Sanctuary Housing. Through many years in the sector, she has developed a deep understanding of what it really means to be homeless and the support homeless individuals need the most. Zofia is currently working as General Manager of Kent Supported Housing.

Gwyn McPherson – Homeless Support

Gwyn has been involved with MCWS since its inception and has undertaken roles as a Volunteer, Venue Lead (Volunteer in charge of the venue), Project Worker and then Project Manager – she held this latter role for 4 years! Gwyn retired from her role as Project Manager at the end of April 2022 and has subsequently become one of our trustees, bringing with her a wealth of experience.

She is also an authorised lay minister in a Church of England church in Maidstone and has served as a Street Pastor in the town since 2011.

Volunteers

Our volunteers are the people who make the Shelter happen on a day-to-day basis. This includes preparing and cooking meals for our guests, listening to and chatting with guests, playing games etc, providing overnight cover - and ensuring that our venues are left clean and tidy at all times. Some volunteers also provide laundry support, haircuts & massages for our guests etc.

GUEST REFERRAL PROCESS

The Winter Shelter is an open access shelter. We operate our own assessment referral process, liaising with other agencies. Referrals are received and reviewed by the Operations Team.

Risk assessments are carried out for each guest, for the health and safety of all our guests and volunteers.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

It is important to recognise that the guests who use the Shelter often have complex problems, which the Shelter and its volunteers are not equipped to deal with. Although we may want to, we cannot solve peoples' problems. We are there to provide basic support and a listening ear.

Whilst guests are being kept safe and fed during the coldest part of the year, our Operations Team work with support agencies and organisations to ensure they get the support they need, to help them address their problems on a longer-term basis. If you are getting into conversations you cannot deal with, let the Operations Team 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 keeping secrets that you are not comfortable with, so please do not try to take on too much. (See 'Respect and Confidentiality', p8)

What is required of our Volunteers?

- ❖ An understanding of your own limitations and boundaries in engaging with guests.
- ❖ Willingness to follow instructions from the Shelter Operations Team and to work as part of a team
- ❖ Ability to respond calmly but quickly in an emergency.
- ❖ Being able to judge when to call for help.
- ❖ Familiarity and ability to work within Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter policies and guidelines, especially regarding Health and Safety procedures.
- ❖ Knowledge of basic First Aid would be useful, but is not essential to volunteering.
- ❖ Sensitivity to issues relating to homelessness, including mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse.
- ❖ Basic knowledge of the building, especially the location of fire exits. (This information will be provided at your first volunteer session)

Volunteers should

- ❖ Be reliable and arrive on time; sign in and out when arriving and leaving the venue
- ❖ Inform the shelter office in plenty of time if unable to attend a rota'd shift. If you need to cancel a shift outside of our office hours (9.30am – 2.30pm Monday to Friday) please call one of our Project Managers (PM's) directly to let them know. The PM's phone numbers are shown at the top of each rota.
- ❖ Make sure you know the venue layout, especially the emergency exits, and any areas that are out of bounds to guests.
- ❖ Treat guests with respect.
- ❖ Be friendly and make guests feel welcome.

- ❖ Work as part of a team and support the Operations Team. You must not challenge their decisions in front of other volunteers or guests as you may not be aware of information to which you are not privy.
- ❖ Not make arrangements to meet guests outside the premises unless it has been arranged by MCWS staff.
- ❖ Not make promises when speaking to guests. People can feel very let down by a promise not kept. MCWS needs to build trust in order to be effective in finding appropriate help for guests. Broken promises can undermine this work. ('I will try...' not 'I will...')
- ❖ Not wear or bring valuables to the Shelter as MCWS cannot be held responsible for their safekeeping or any loss – there may not be anywhere to store valuables safely.
- ❖ Wear appropriate and sensible clothing.
- ❖ Wear the correct PPE, as required by Government guidelines at the time

Golden Rules

- ❖ Check identities – know who people are.
- ❖ Do **NOT** give personal information especially your address, telephone number or e-mail address and **NEVER** lend your mobile phone to any of the guests.
- ❖ Do not invite or take guests to your home.
- ❖ Make sure neither you nor a colleague is left alone with a guest. This is not only for your own safety, but so that if anyone alleges an impropriety against you there is a witness.
- ❖ Do not give or lend money to guests.
- ❖ We have a no alcohol policy on the premises.
- ❖ Do not touch guests unexpectedly.
- ❖ No drugs (other than prescribed) or alcohol allowed.
- ❖ Do not intervene physically to stop a fight.
- ❖ Do not give any medication to guests, not even aspirin, paracetamol etc.
- ❖ Report any concerns you have, confidentially, to the Operations Team or Venue Lead, who will take appropriate action.
- ❖ Do not invite any outside agencies into the shelter. Please refer them to the Project Manager who will liaise with the Venue Lead and invite them as appropriate.

Respect and Confidentiality

When talking to guests it is important not to press them for information. Please acknowledge that some guests may feel hurt or let down by past experiences and may not wish to talk about them. Others will like nothing better than to tell you their story. Respect guests' confidentiality and don't allow your conversation to become common gossip - especially with other guests or volunteers.

Although confidentiality is important for building trust, it is not about keeping secrets and this should be made clear to guests. If at any time you feel there is an issue, let a member of the Operations Team know immediately. Likewise, if you feel a conversation is getting too demanding, tell the guest you may have to let the Operations Staff know what is being said in order to get appropriate help. It is then up to the guest if they want to continue.

Gifts

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. The general rule is that all gifts should be shared with the team, and the guest should be told this is the policy. In any case, all gifts should be reported to the Operations Team and recorded in the Logbook. Any gift deemed to be too expensive or in some way inappropriate should be gently returned to the guest. Guests should not be encouraged to give gifts.

Complaints

There are policies, available on request, about dealing with complaints by guests.

There will always be at least one member of the Operations Team present at each of our afternoon and evening sessions.

RULES FOR GUESTS

- ❖ Anyone **genuinely in need** of a hot meal will be given one. However, there may be restrictions on numbers allowed into each Venue. If we have too many meals-only guests, we will provide takeaway hot meals to those in excess of our 'safe' numbers.
- ❖ Only guests who have been allocated a place by the Operations team will be allowed into the overnight accommodation.
- ❖ Only the Operations team members can authorise guests coming into the Shelter.
- ❖ Guests will not be allowed into the Shelter if under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- ❖ No possession of alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises.
- ❖ No offensive weapons.
- ❖ Violent, threatening, discriminatory or other anti-social behaviour or language will not be tolerated.
- ❖ No smoking inside the building (There will be an area available to smoke outside. No more than 2 guests out at one time after 10:00pm)
- ❖ No pets.
- ❖ The evening dinner venue will open at 6.45pm and guests must arrive each night no later than 7.15pm, unless this has been pre-arranged with the Operations team.
- ❖ On a guests' first night at a venue, a member of the Operations team or a nominated volunteer will show the guest around, to make sure he/she knows his/her way around, including where the fire exits and assembly points are.
- ❖ Guests are not allowed in the kitchen.
- ❖ Guests must not ask volunteers for money or give gifts to volunteers.
- ❖ Guests must not ask the volunteers for any of their personal contact details.
- ❖ Guests must only use areas of the building designated to the Shelter
- ❖ Once a guest has taken up his/her place at the Shelter for that evening, he/she cannot leave and come back later that evening.
- ❖ Guests must remember to take all their items with them when they leave.
- ❖ The Shelter is for those aged 18 years and above.
- ❖ No bed sharing.
- ❖ No male guests to go into female sleeping areas.

The Shelter rules are for the safety and protection of all persons. If guests break the rules they may be asked to leave, excluded for a week, or permanently barred from the Shelter.

TIMETABLE OF SHIFTS

Afternoon shifts: 3.15pm – 5.45pm

- ❖ Prepare and offer drinks/light refreshments
- ❖ Socialise with and support guests

Evening shifts for evening meal

Cooking Team: 6.00pm – 9.00pm

- ❖ Prepare, cook and serve the evening meal. Dinner will be served at 7.30pm
- ❖ Wash up, clear away all items used and sanitize the kitchen

All kitchen volunteers will need an up-to-date food hygiene certificate, issued within the last 3 years. If you don't have one, we can arrange this for you.

General volunteers (non-kitchen teams): 6.30pm - 9.30pm

- ❖ Set up camp beds, each with a sleeping bag and pillow.
- ❖ Set up tables and chairs.
- ❖ Welcome and serve guests. Share a meal alongside our guests, in the manner of a family/friend's mealtime.
- ❖ Socialise with our guests at the evening's activities (film night, games night etc) and, more importantly, listen to them if they wish to talk.
- ❖ Clean all eating areas & tidy away as appropriate.
- ❖ Ensure any incidents are recorded in the Logbook

NB - Guests will start to arrive from about 7pm.

Volunteers are encouraged to chat with our guests for the duration of their time in the shelter each evening.

Overnight shifts: 9.30pm – 7.30am

We will have one paid member of staff (an Overnight Project Worker) at all overnight shifts, but will also require 2 x overnight volunteers each night. The Overnight Project Worker will remain awake throughout the night, but will be supported by the overnight volunteers on a shift pattern (half the night awake, half sleeping).

The purpose of the overnight cover is to ensure our guests are safe and comfortable, but know there is support available if they need it.

The role of our overnight volunteers will include:

- ❖ Making sure everyone is comfortable and settled in for the night
- ❖ **11p.m. Lights out.** All guests should adhere to lights out in the sleeping area and all efforts to be quiet should be made.
- ❖ There should always be one volunteer awake, alongside the overnight staff member.
- ❖ Any incidents must be recorded in the Incident log book.

Morning shifts:

On weekdays our overnight guests will be offered breakfast at Maidstone Day Centre, so we will not be offering breakfast facilities at the shelter.

At the weekends (Saturday & Sunday mornings), breakfast will be offered at the shelter.

Weekend morning roles: Kitchen team: 7.30am – 8.30am (finish times may vary by venue)

- ❖ Prepare and serve breakfast
- ❖ Prepare packed lunches for guests to take away.
- ❖ Clear away and sanitize the kitchen area.

All kitchen volunteers will need an up-to-date food hygiene certificate, issued within the last 3 years. If you don't have one, we can arrange this for you.

General morning volunteer roles: (finish times may vary by venue)

Weekday mornings: (7.00am – 8.30am)

Weekend mornings: (8.00am – 9.00am)

- ❖ Weekday mornings only - Offer overnight guests a cup of tea/biscuit before they leave for breakfast at the Day Centre
- ❖ Pack away camp beds, pillows etc. Put sleeping bags and pillowcases into sacks ready for laundering.
- ❖ Tidy and clean the sleeping areas.
- ❖ Ensure the property is left in good, clean condition.

VENUES

The Operations team (or one of the other volunteers) will ensure the following information is communicated to all volunteers at their first shift in a Venue.

All volunteers must:

- ❖ Be familiar with the building in which they are working
- ❖ Know where the fire exits and fire extinguishers are.
- ❖ Know where the First Aid Box and list of emergency numbers are.
- ❖ Make sure that fire exits are unlocked and not blocked.
- ❖ Be aware of the venue's Fire Instructions.
- ❖ Know the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
- ❖ Know where guests can and cannot go.
- ❖ Make sure any areas that are 'out of bounds' to guests remain secure
- ❖ Know a safe area where they can leave their belongings.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Our 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 and guests using the Winter Shelter. We aim to provide such information, training and supervision as is needed for this purpose.

Objectives

- ❖ To provide a working environment that is healthy and safe, with satisfactory amenities.
- ❖ To ensure Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice are observed.
- ❖ To provide and maintain safe premises and equipment including appropriate protective clothing/PPE.
- ❖ To ensure the use, handling, storage and transportation of food, equipment, articles and substances are safe.
- ❖ To ensure 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 Trustees, Operations Team, Church/Venue Coordinators, Volunteers and guests on safety matters in each church
- ❖ To ensure all volunteers and guests using the premises are safe and not risking their health.
- ❖ Clean up any spillage immediately.

FIRE INSTRUCTIONS

All volunteers need to be aware of the fire instructions for the venues at which they are volunteering. They must familiarise themselves with the procedure(s) in case of fire. All venues must have fire instructions clearly displayed on the wall.

MANUAL HANDLING

There are some basic principles that each volunteer should observe prior to carrying out a manual handling operation:

- ❖ ensure that the object is light enough to lift, is stable and unlikely to shift or move
- ❖ heavy or awkward loads should be moved using a handling aid
- ❖ make sure the route is clear of obstructions
- ❖ make sure there is somewhere to put the load down wherever it is to be moved to
- ❖ stand as close to the load as possible, and spread your feet to shoulder width
- ❖ bend your knees and try to keep the back's natural, upright posture
- ❖ grasp the load firmly, as close to the body as you can
- ❖ use your legs to lift the load in a smooth motion as this offers more leverage, reducing the strain on your back
- ❖ carry the load close to your body, with elbows tucked in
- ❖ avoid twisting your body as much as possible, by turning your feet to position yourself with the load.

FOOD HYGIENE AND KITCHEN SAFETY

All kitchen volunteers should have an up to date 'Food hygiene certificate', issued within the last 3 years.

However, here are some general points for **all** volunteers to be aware of. Cooks and those storing, preparing and handling any food, including serving, should follow these guidelines or refer to our comprehensive Food Safety manual which will be available on request.

Preparation

Food should be thoroughly cooked to a core temperature of at least 75°C and kept at that temperature for at least two minutes. (If you are cooking a casserole, the core temperature should be taken from the centre of a piece of meat.)

Cooling

Cool food before putting in the refrigerator. Food should not stand around for more than ninety minutes, at which time deterioration will begin.

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 75°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. Further, it is important to allow at least 2 minutes after removal from the microwave before eating.

Serving

Hot food must be served at a temperature of at least 63°C.

(Information from 'The Food Safety Handbook' by Graham Aston)

ALLERGY GUIDELINES

As a charity, MCWS does not have to provide information for guests, volunteers and staff about allergens present in the food as ingredients. However, the Food Standards Agency recommends that charities should consider the risks of allergens in the food they are preparing and inform those who will be consuming the food of any potential allergens. Details of allergens can be found on the Food Standards Agency website <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide>

PROCEDURES FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Although MCWS does not expect violent incidences, it is important to recognise that actual or potential violence may be a problem whilst working with homeless guests.

The following guidelines were issued by the London Rough Sleepers Unit. They are used by both Shelter & Crisis and are intended to offer direction on the most effective ways of preventing violent behaviour and protecting from its consequences.

The Health and Safety Statement included in this booklet acknowledges the responsibility 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 risk. These procedures should be viewed within the context of that shared responsibility.

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 yourself or others when dealing with actual or potential violence or threatening behaviour.

In responding to violence or potential violence, your own safety and that of colleagues and the client group 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. They should also support any decisions made by the Operations Team, in banning or excluding guests from the building. As far as possible, one individual person 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

Should an incident occur, 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.

In particular, one volunteer should ensure that any vulnerable person is removed from the area and, if possible, any potential weapons such as plates or cutlery should be removed from the area quickly and quietly.

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' 'safety escape routes' in case it should be necessary to get out of the way fast.

The Project Manager or Project Worker should be in a position to telephone for police assistance should this become necessary.

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 unlikely event of an attack, only use force sufficient to stop the attacker and prevent injury to self, colleagues or other guests. 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 Shelter, 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. This should be done by a member of the Operations team or a nominated volunteer.
- ❖ Arranging for any volunteer that has been scared or hurt to leave the shift, accompanied if appropriate.
- ❖ Arranging longer term support if and when necessary.
- ❖ Discussing the incident and trying to draw out constructive lessons for avoiding a similar incident in the future.
- ❖ Considering 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

In order to promote safety in the Shelter, always remember to observe these rules:

- ❖ Check the identity of each guest arriving at the door by asking for their name.
- ❖ Never give your home telephone number or home address to a guest, or invite a guest into your home.
- ❖ Make sure you are never alone with a guest.
- ❖ Leave your valuables at home, or, if necessary, in the nominated safe place at the venue
- ❖ Do not give money to guests – if you are concerned about their situation, refer them to the Operations Team
- ❖ Do not touch any guest, even to wake them up.
- ❖ 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 Operations Team. Please take directions from them at all times, especially with regard to matters of personal safety.
- ❖ Do not offer guests any medication.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL INFORMATION / PROCEDURES

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

Drugs or alcohol must not be used/consumed on the premises by any guest or volunteer:

- ❖ Drinking alcohol whilst on shift is not allowed.
- ❖ Volunteers should not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when coming on shift.
- ❖ Guests will not be admitted if inebriated or under the influence of drugs

Action to be taken if policy is breached:

If guests are found drinking on the premises or if they are found to be drunk having gained entry to the Shelter, they will be asked to leave the venue. This can be done that evening by a member of the Operations Team or a nominated volunteer.

- ❖ If guests are found taking drugs on the premises, they will be asked to leave the venue.
- ❖ Anyone found dealing drugs will be asked to leave the venue.
- ❖ Volunteers who suspect that someone is violating these policies must inform the Operations Team. Volunteers should not police a night Shelter but they should not be negligent either.
- ❖ Any bans will be enforced by the Project Manager
- ❖ MCWS reserves the right to offer 'one chance' but this is completely at the discretion of the Project Manager, in consultation with the Project worker/Volunteers who were present at the time of any incident.

Communication

- ❖ Guests will be advised of this policy on entering the Shelter, when they sign the Guest Agreement.
- ❖ If anyone is excluded from a venue as a result of breaching the policy, it may be extended to all Venues.