

a bed for the night



Volunteer Handbook

reading churches winter watch
emergency accommodation provision

Note to Returning Volunteers

Due to the potential dangers from some guests **all volunteers MUST have undergone training** by Faith Christian Group.

HOWEVER for those who have been involved in previous years we will only require that you read an update of lessons learned and some basic reminders.

We then ask that you sign and return a declaration form stating that you have read the information and will abide by the guidelines set out.

Malc Peirce
Director

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Note that this manual is amended year on year, so it is worth checking online for the latest version.

Reports for 2015/16/17 with lots more information are available online.

This document forms the basis for how we operate the Reading Churches Winter Night Shelter, “A Bed for the Night” or **B4N** for short. This document has been updated as we have progressed. Check the date in the footer.

The project is funded and run by **Faith Christian Group (FCG)** in conjunction with participating churches.

The Night Shelter is run on principles originally set down by **Housing Justice**.

Throughout the handbook indications will be given where material has been source from

Housing Justice  or written specifically by FCG 



Core Team of B4N

For the first two years we had a core team consisting of several church leaders and co-ordinators.

For 2017 we felt that it was unnecessary to have an active team due to the process being well established. However we felt that it was good to have occasional meetings of key individuals so we have now effectively recreated the Core Team.

Churches & Volunteers

All Churches will supply a “**Co-ordinator**” and a team of volunteers, supplemented in some cases by volunteers from other churches. Overnight teams can now appoint a supervisor who will be paid £100 per night for staying awake. This role can be shared.

For Churches **hosting** B4N, please ensure that all volunteers have **signed up** as a volunteer using the **form** provided by FCG and have been to one of the **training sessions**. **Please do not allow people to just come along and help at the night shelter**. There are dangers which training will mitigate.

If in doubt speak to the co-ordinator admin@b4n.org.uk 0774 983 3476
or Malcolm Peirce director@fcg.org.uk 0793 684 5300

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Introduction (Malc Peirce – Director FCG)



FAITH is completely 'cross-denominational'. It is one of the joys of our work that we can come to appreciate the breadth and depth of the body of Christ in all its flavours and varieties

We are occasionally asked why we do what we do. For all our employees and most volunteers, the answer is easy. We do it because we love Jesus and want to be part of the answer to the prayer Jesus taught His disciples :-

"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The well-known words in John's Gospel tell us that:-

"God so loved the world that He sent his only 'begotten' Son".*

*(specifically incarnated by the Holy Spirit, not by human action)

Jesus announced his own ministry with the words:-

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

But I suspect that back then I heard that as "poor in spirit", not poor in health or wealth. But when he goes on to talk about prisoners, blind and oppressed, it becomes more practical.

We often quote the words of Isaiah:-

"to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter"

Isaiah 58v6

It is wrong that anyone should have to sleep rough in an affluent town.

However we know that many rough sleepers are happy to cope outdoors most of the year, it is the cold winter months that hit hardest.

A permanent night shelter is objected to generally as it might become full of people who simply never move on. A temporary - winter months only - provision in various venues would

- remove any sense of permanence
- avoid the overheads of a permanent building
- spread the burden of provision
- allow for flexibility

A bed for the night provides **accommodation for rough sleepers**, at local churches, in January & February.

The model is simple, well-tryed and based on the Housing Justice model. A **rota of local churches** offer **one night per week** each. In 2016 we had **9 churches** (2 changing in February). We are constantly looking to add more and share the load.

This manual is a combination of Faith's own training manual for volunteers, based on over 25 years of experience on the streets, and the Housing Justice pack.

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The aims of FAITH Christian Group

According to our **articles of association** as a charity our aims are:-

To finance, staff and manage Christian Outreach.

1. To **share the gospel of Salvation** with people groups that may otherwise have little or no contact with Christians or Church.
2. To **promote and encourage Christian service** among the homeless, needy and lonely.
3. To **be a strong witness** both to Christians and non-Christians.
4. To continue to work toward the vision of a '**24 hour church**' in the town centre that would be available as a '**night shelter**'.
5. To **be a flexible resource** willing and available to hear God's will and obey it.

When acting on behalf of the Charity all staff and volunteers will be expected to uphold the values and teaching of the Christian faith and act in a manner that does not bring the Charity or the Christian faith into disrepute. All sessions begin with prayer. However, vocal participation is not a requirement.

What FAITH actually does

It has been commonly believed that FAITH just does Soup-Runs and the Tea Bar. In fact that is a relatively small part of our activities which are now **three-fold**.

"ReadiStreet", as we unofficially call it, is the **street work** that FAITH started by doing. It was the obvious need of rough-sleepers that inspired Jim McConnell to go out with his flask and sandwiches many years ago. It does indeed use most volunteers, but involves least staff time or expense. It is the most likely reason that you are reading this.

"ReadiFood" is our food parcel service. Collection of food from churches and sometimes schools and supermarkets takes up a large amount of staff time. Salaries and shopping for food when donations fall short, which is the norm, uses a large amount of our donation income.

"Stepping Stones" is our infant housing project. We say infant because at time of writing we only have one house, but at least we've made a start and at any one time there are three less homeless people in Reading.

Structure

At time of writing FCG is headed up by the **Director** and overseen by **Trustees**. Day to day practical activities are carried out by **Support Workers, Food Bank Co-ordinator** and an **Administrator**. All staff are part-time. That does mean that the office is at times unmanned.

Coordination and Governance

A Bed for the Night is overseen, funded and run by Faith Christian Group, registered CIO 1163355. Therefore ultimate responsibility lies with the board of Trustees and the charity Director. FCG employ a Project Manager, to do the preparatory work before the shelter starts, provide oversight while the scheme is running and write a final report.

A Bed for the Night has a **Core Team** comprising the venue coordinator/s from each of the participating churches plus a chair and treasurer will need to be set up. This group is best kept as small as is practically feasible to ensure decisions are made and actions executed. We also recommend each venue or individual church may also like to have a committee or informal group meetings to keep volunteers informed and up to date with developments.

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A QUICK OVERVIEW of the Night Shelter Scheme

TIMINGS

It is likely that we would go for something like doors open at 7.30 - meal 8.00 - bedtime 10.30 - lights out 11.00

RESPONSIBILITY

Each venue will have ultimate responsibility for the running of the night provision. Security of the building would need thought. Access to certain areas might need restricting.

Co-ordinators Each venue will have their own Co-ordinator to head up their team of volunteers.

Project Manager F C G have employed a person to act as the Manager of the whole project;

- to ensure that everything and everyone are in the right place at the right time
- to work with churches and ensure that evenings are conducted safely
- to liaise with St. Mungos-Broadway to agree who is eligible to use the provision.

INSURANCE Every Church must check that its own insurance for buildings and contents / public liability covers it for the activity of the night shelter. All **signed up volunteers** will be covered for Public Liability by Faith's insurance.

SLEEPING

Camp beds, duvets and pillows will be provided by **Faith** and moved from venue to venue each day.

Duvet covers, sheets and pillow cases will be provided by each venue, each church will likely buy/obtain its own supply. All **bed linen** will need to be **washed each week**. Separate provision will be made for women.

FOOD & HOSPITALITY

An evening meal & breakfast will be provided. Hospitality has to be right at the top of our priorities. Anyone rough sleeping has found themselves there through a complex set of circumstances, some probably of their own making, others imposed upon them. Many in our experience will have been through the care system, yet others the armed forces. All need love, care and a great deal of patience. Friendship is the big requirement, however, various activities, table games, T.V. etc. would really help make guests feel at home.

WASHING Toilet facilities would have to be provided together with some basic washing facility.

WHO CAN COME IN?

You will be provided with a list of "eligible" guests, provided by Reading Street Services (St Mungos).

A limit is set on numbers accepted – i.e. number of available beds. 15 men, 3 women normally.

Many will come with addictions, most commonly alcohol. **House rules exclude anyone who is seriously intoxicated.**

It would be inadvisable to take anyone in who was clearly under the influence.

In theory, all alcohol should be "left at the door". However what is in a person's bag is their business. NEVER SEARCH.

VOLUNTEER TEAM

Each church would provide a team supplemented where possible or necessary by people from other churches, perhaps those unable to provide a venue themselves. Each evening would require:-

- a supervisor; hospitality team (4 plus); kitchen team (down to you, but at least 2)
- recommended 4 overnight volunteers (two asleep, one awake at any one time)

COUPLES & DOGS We are unable to take people with dogs or couples unhappy to sleep apart since it adds a lot of complications for accommodation.

Due to the potential dangers from some guests all volunteers MUST have undergone training by Faith Christian Group. [Return to Contents](#)

Housing Justice Quality Mark



HOUSING JUSTICE NIGHT SHELTERS - BACKGROUND

Churches and Communities across the UK have been setting up shelters to meet the needs of homeless people in the coldest months of the year for many years. Churches have simply opened up their church halls and other facilities during periods of freezing weather in order to save lives. Faith Christian Group has worked with rough sleepers, sofa surfers and the desperately poor for 25 years.

The **Housing Justice Churches Winter Night Shelter Model** evolved over the last 10 years. With projects publicising success, funding opportunities have become available from Housing Justice's partnership with the Cinnamon Network and others.

Different groups use different names for their night shelters – some are referred to as *Cold Weather Shelters* others as *Winter Night Shelters*. In this resource pack will refer to them as Churches and Community Night Shelters or Night Shelters. The common features being – they are run by churches or community groups, they are temporary and they are only open at night. Where “you” is used, it is directed at the individual carrying out the role of central coordination.

The people who use the shelters are referred to as **guests** throughout this manual.



Why run a Winter Night Shelter?

Nationally the numbers of people who are homeless has increased alarmingly over the past few years.

This estimate does not include **hidden homeless** people, such as those sleeping on public transport, in overcrowded and unsuitable living conditions, in temporary housing, and even in closed areas such as car parks and rubbish bins. Homelessness agencies report an increase in the number of people arriving on the streets, living precariously in squats and derelict buildings, sofa surfing with friends and accessing statutory and voluntary sector homelessness support services. **Background factors** include: family and relationship breakdown; changes to the benefit system; cuts to local services e.g. housing advice; migration, unemployment, poverty and debt; poor re-integration into society from the armed forces and other institutions such as care and prisons; and an acute and growing shortage of affordable accommodation.

Much has been done in recent years to reduce and prevent homelessness both by voluntary and statutory agencies but a clear need remains. Though support providers work hard in a sector where funding is increasingly hard to come by, affordable accommodation continues to be at a shortage. According to Homeless Link, 53% of projects in the Midlands had decreased funding in 2011/12 and that the most common impact of funding decreases is reduced support for people with complex needs and the most reported gap in provision is housing for individuals to move on to.

Some who are street homeless and who come into contact with outreach services are assessed and offered assistance which, according to their needs, may be a hostel bed or perhaps “reconnection” to the place where they last had secure accommodation if they are eligible and able to engage with support there.

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Some homeless people remain **below the radar**, and a **minority refuse the help** on offer through mainstream homelessness services. Others still go in and out of the system – sometimes in their own accommodation, sometimes in hostels and sometimes on the streets – the so called revolving door. Others still are in the unfortunate position of being refused any assistance at all – they are regarded as “**non-priority homeless**”, who are expected to sort out their own housing arrangements or they are without recourse to public funds.¹ These can include migrants and refused asylum seekers, who are effectively destitute.

Over the past years groups of churches across England and Wales have begun to plug these gaps by providing temporary overnight accommodation through using the NIGHT SHELTER model.

There is an identified local need

Locally it is estimated that there can be as many as 40 people who are rough sleeping on any given night. Reading Borough Council for some years now have commissioned St. Mungo’s to run a Street Services team whose role is to connect people living on the streets with pathways to housing. The team comprises three people.

People who are Homeless have human rights

Housing Justice recently launched the UK Common Rights Project, to raise awareness and campaign for everyone’s basic or common right to access SHELTER, FOOD, WATER, and SANITATION- things that many people across the UK who are rough sleeping do not necessarily have.² In reality, local authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to everyone but to have a duty to house someone permanently, the individual has to be classified as

- **homeless,**
- **eligible,**
- in **priority need** (very vulnerable),
- not have made themselves previously **intentionally homeless**
- or be **fleeing domestic violence.**

Since November 2012 this duty can also be discharged by a 12 month tenancy in the private rented sector. These criteria are fairly narrow for example, the categories of Priority need are as follows:-

- **Pregnant women**, or those with whom a pregnant women resides.
- A person with **dependent children.**
- A person who has been **made homeless** because of a fire, flood or similar disaster.
- A person who is **vulnerable** as a result of
 - **age, illness, disability** or some other special reason. Or a person with whom such a vulnerable person may reside.
 - Persons vulnerable as a result of serving in the **armed forces.**
 - Persons vulnerable as result of time spent in Prison.
 - Persons vulnerable as a result of being made homeless following violence.
- 16 and 17 year olds.
- 18 and 19 year olds leaving care.

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¹ See section on The Rights of People who are homeless

² See more at: <http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/the-uk-common-rights-project.html#sthash.jKSxnAYx.dpuf>



It is an expression of Gods favour to those in need

From the earliest days of the Christian era, church communities have been providers of hospitality and shelter where those in material and spiritual need have found welcome and rest. The fact that homelessness exists in our communities evokes in us the desire to offer hospitality and shelter. At its simplest, this is a desire to express solidarity with another human being; for Christians it is also an expression of God's favour towards our neighbour who is in need.

The Housing Justice Night Shelter Network started with and still largely consists of Churches, mostly interdenominational groups, working together with communities. As networks and needs have expanded, so has the **diversity** of the groups using this model. The Housing Justice aim is that every Night Shelter respects the **spirituality** of each Guest and Volunteer taking part in the shelter.

This model can to be used by those who have faith or none. However a report published by Lemos and Crane in April 2013,³ which was the first study into homeless people's attitude to faith involving in-depth interviews with over 70 people, showed **the importance of including faith and spirituality** in the support required by homeless people. Providing hospitality and sharing whatever we have is an unequivocal message of the gospel.



For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me .⁴

Responding to homelessness and housing need is a way of putting faith into action. In those lacking a basic good, and above all shelter, Christians can recognise Christ in the other person. In the long term we have to question why people are homeless and sleeping on the streets or on buses but in the short term practical emergency responses are required.

Churches are uniquely placed to provide night shelter to those who are homeless and have fallen through the welfare safety net. They have physical assets in the form of buildings and social assets in the form of people who can provide volunteer help – the two main ingredients for Winter Night Shelters. Although the buildings are essential it is the volunteers who can offer the unique services of friendship, hospitality, care, and a patient listening ear – not always as easily provided by statutory agencies that are trying to juggle funding cuts and pressure for outcomes. Volunteers and guests of winter shelters often engender a feeling of a true community.



There are wider community benefits

As well as providing a practical resource to people in need and lacking immediate accommodation, churches setting up a NIGHT SHELTER have also found they have experienced-

- Stronger links within and between the Christian denominations. Sharing buildings, staff and volunteers mean that different churches in a particular area are brought into closer cooperation and relationship. This has led to joint worship in some areas. In at least one case (Hackney NIGHT SHELTER) some members of the local Muslim community now work as volunteers in the shelter scheme.
- Stronger links in the wider community. NIGHT SHELTERS allow people (volunteers and guests) who have not met before to eat together and talk about their lives. Both sides seem to benefit from this interaction.
- Volunteers see the practical and compassionate face of Christianity and move forward in their journey of faith.

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³The Lemos and Crane Report- Lost and Found: faith and spirituality in the lives of homeless people
<http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/home/index.php?id=217018>

⁴ Mt 25 verse 35

Guest Comments

“If it were not for B4N I would definitely be back in Prison, I’m out on Licence and would have committed a crime to get me back inside, 3 meals a day and a roof over my head”
Guest.

“B4N really changed him, gave him his dignity back and helped improve his self-esteem. It isn’t just having the bed, it is having you and all your volunteers to make someone feel they are worth something again.” St Mungos.

“I would like to offer you all my sincere gratitude for your kindness, patience, understanding and spirituality (not of course forgetting the high standard of culinary skills!!!)” Guest.

“Thank you so much, I will never forget what you have done for me”
Guest.

“I’ve loved my time with you all and would like to volunteer next year”
Guest.

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Guidelines / Rules for Volunteers

The Shelter Scheme will operate from **January 2019** for 12 weeks.

Training / Safety

In order to comply with our public liability **insurance** and ensure the safety of all involved, volunteers must:-

- 1) Be **trained***see footnote
- 2) Sign a **declaration** that they have a) **read the handbook** and b) will **abide by the guidelines**.
- 3) Supply **email addresses** and **phone numbers** so that we can keep them in the loop.

We do not divulge to volunteers our guests' backgrounds, criminal history, addictions or personal details. In the past we have accommodated a murderer, a paedophile and many with criminal histories. Co-ordinators will be alerted to serious matters, however if volunteers adhere to the guidelines they do not need to know detail.

The project must be welcoming and have at its core an ethos of hospitality and mutuality. This can mean different things but often

- Staff and volunteers take the time to join in conversation and activities as well as sitting down to eat with guests.
- Tea, coffee and/or cold water is available for guest's use throughout their stay.
- There is a selection of materials available to pass the time such as television, reading material and games

Key Points for Volunteers

- Ensure that you know God wants you to be involved with the Night Shelter
- Pray regularly about it and especially the day of the shelter at your church
- Ask at least one other person to pray for you regularly
- Co-ordinators have a document that covers Health & Safety, Drugs & Alcohol and other matters.
- Make sure you know the building layout, especially emergency exits, and out of bounds areas.
- Remember that no list of policies can cover every situation that may arise.
- Be ready to think on your feet and to use your common sense. Always seek help if in doubt.

Timings

Beds & Bedding		Will be delivered at a time suitable for your venue, agreed with the Project Manager
Team arrives		Time to be determined by the team 6.30?
Prayer	7.20	The last vital item before opening the doors is for your team to pray together
Doors open	7.30	(Except for Providence who have their own start time)
Meal served	8.00	
Doors closed	9.00	(Late arrivals may be let in up till 10.00 so long as they are on the guest list)
Bedtime	10.00	onwards
Lights out	11.00	(or earlier if guests request)
Breakfast	7.30 +	(this can be flexible until we find what suits best) Guests out by 9.00 a.m.

General Building safety

Full assessment of your premises will have been done by the co-ordinator / Project manager / Director of FCG before the start date. Above all else, fire exists must be checked as functioning and clear for use.

Fire Safety

Each venue must have its own Fire Safety Policy and Evacuation Procedures

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*It has been agreed that breakfast catering staff and church staff who may be in attendance need not undergo full training but must complete an application form and sign the declaration that they have thoroughly read the manual.

Teams

A reminder about teams:-

- 2/3 in the kitchen
- 4 + hosting through the evening
- 3 overnight – two male – one female* (one paid)
- 2 on breakfast duty; 2 present to supervise guests; 2 to clear away the bedding.

*if that panics you, please remember that we can supplement from outside your own volunteer team.

Training

At time of writing the thinking of the core team was that there are different levels of training required.

- At least one of the **kitchen staff** will need **Food Hygiene certification** or at least training and supervision by a qualified person.
- **Hospitality teams** will need training in personal conduct and safety.
- Overnight teams will need as much training as we can possibly provide and a **First Aider** is advisable.

Co-ordinators and those with special responsibility

As well as a **night shelter/venue manager/supervisor**, we are asking that you nominate a deputy and individuals to take responsibility for

- Door safety** FCG staff will be available where venues feel unsafe; arrangements will be made to effectively control entry to your venue. However, a member of your team allocated to the door would be helpful.
- Kitchen** safety (e.g. knives to be locked away); hygiene;
menu (cook/supervisor to liaise with other 6 venues as to **menus**)
- Hospitality** as a team, you should plan what activities can be made available to your guests
(T.V. ? – Magazines – Internet?)
Co-ordinators need to discuss this with the Night Shelter Manager
- Set up** there is a sheet listing all the steps required in setting up the venue
- Breakfast** someone to supervise the fresh team coming in early. The overnight team can help set up
- First Aid** at least one of the overnight volunteers / staff must be trained in **First Aid at Work**.
Our basic stance on First Aid is do what you know is safe to do, such as you would for a member of your family. For anything else, and you might for instance have an incident of a fit, or collapse due to alcohol or drugs, call for an **ambulance**.

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Practicalities

Facilities

Church halls or churches themselves must be easily accessible and have the use of kitchens, toilets, washing facilities, heating and some storage capacity. They need to have met the standards of the NIGHT SHELTER building and fire risk assessment check that covers kitchen hygiene, heating, fire prevention procedures and physical safety of the building. The majority of buildings will have safety measures in place because they will be in use by the public already.

Equipment

- Camp beds, duvets and pillows are provided by FCG
- Venues provide sheets, duvet covers and pillow cases
- Plates, glasses, bowls, mugs, cutlery and chairs/tables for use during meals.
- Cooking utensils if needed (some NIGHT SHELTER have volunteers cook at home).
- Towels, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, flannels, deodorant and toilet paper are also needed. You can obtain – or FCG can provide

Women

For Female guests it is important to have at least a screened off area in the hall where they can have some privacy. The ideal, if space allows, is a separate room for women guests. Toiletries and sanitary towels for women should also be available (ask ReadiFood).

Smoking Area

A designated smoking area outside the NIGHT SHELTERS should be established for those who wish to smoke with facility to extinguish cigarettes safely.

Recreational Facilities

We recommend providing **at least** newspapers, games and puzzles for recreational time before and after supper. Some NIGHT SHELTER provide a TV or supervised computer access. If there is table tennis or a church hall piano they will often be put to good use!

Personal Washing Facilities

All venues should provide toilets and wash hand basins and where possible one venue in the scheme should provide showering facilities. If no showers are available ensure that guests know that they can shower daytimes at CiRDIC.

Laundry

Each venue will need to wash bedding each week

Clothing

Some NIGHT SHELTER collect donated clothing and distribute it to guests who are in need of specific items. However, this activity can cause problems between guests if some feel they have not been fairly treated. Clothing is available through CiRDIC.

Food

Volunteers and guests are encouraged to eat together so enough food needs to be prepared for all. On arrival guests are usually given a warm drink, later they are provided with a hot meal with a vegetarian option available for those who don't eat meat for reasons religious or otherwise. Breakfast is usually cereal and toast but a cooked breakfast is very popular if it can be safely provided. Menus will be co-ordinated by the Project Manager. Bulk supplies of pasta, rice, pulses, tinned vegetables, cereals etc. are available via the Food Bank run by FCG (ReadiFood). Ask the Project manager.

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Personal Safety and Accidents



- Your personal Safety is paramount.
- Do nothing that would endanger yourself.
- Being indoors increases the difficulty of dealing with aggressive guests. It is not so easy to walk away.
- **There should always be someone on the door.**
- Anyone clearly under the influence of drink or drugs should be refused entry.
- Alcoholic drink and drugs are strictly prohibited in the building. Guests may have them in their bags, however as long as they stay there that is not your concern.
- Use of drugs* on the premises is a major concern. We cannot be seen to be condoning use and guests must be made aware that if they are found using drugs anywhere on the premises, they will be barred from the Shelter.
- Take care with hot water and drinks.
- In the event of an accident stay calm and alert another member of staff. Record details in the **Accident/Incident book.**
- **Evacuate** the building if there is any danger to occupants
- Call for Emergency Services.
- When clearing up you are advised to wear **surgical gloves**
- If clearing up any **bodily fluids** you **must wear gloves**
- If you have open cuts on your own hands you should ensure they are well covered.
- Wear gloves if at all unsure. Gloves must be available.
- Take care when using any chemicals. You should only have to use detergent under normal circumstances.
- If using bleach — wear gloves.
- Take care with electrical items
- When dismantling beds and bedding **always wear the stick injury safety gloves** provided. Many guest like to assist with packing up their own beds. This is to be encouraged, but beware of them tackling other people's beds
- Place any needles in the yellow **Sharps Box.**

Signing guests in

There is a **Guest Agreement** form which must be filled in. This covers **acceptable behaviour** and reasons for exclusion. The **welcome talk** to guests must cover “Do’s and Don’ts”

Thought must go into where guests can be allowed out during the night to smoke or drink is they have to. However, you must think about **implications** for the neighbourhood if they leave the building to use **drugs.** [Return to Contents](#)

Do's and Don'ts

One can be forgiven for feeling that “common sense” is all that is needed. Experience has shown however that sometimes that is not the case. These “Do's and Don'ts” are offered as a check list against which to test your thinking about how to behave in the Night Shelter. Some of the following may seem excessive. We only ask that you see them as advice from those with experience. We have known two very sensible volunteers for instance who were tricked out of serious amounts of money.

Jesus said, “*Be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves*”



Do's

- Do try to **be aware** of what is going on around you at all times
- Do be **polite** and **helpful**
- Do respect “personal space”
- Do be **sensitive**, most of our guests have real issues in their lives Some will have been abused in some way or another
- Do be aware of potential **danger** (people may have a violent past and may even be carrying a knife)
- Do try to remember people's **names** and develop friendships
- Do remember that we may be the only people who show an **interest** in them except the drug dealer or the off licence
- Do take a short **break** if you feel like it, this can be quite emotionally demanding
- Do **dress sensibly**, especially women.
- Do remember that what may seem like a perfectly **harmless gesture** in normal circles may be misunderstood
- Do tell your co-ordinator or the Project manager if you are worried about anything
- Do ensure that you have your pastor's approval and the **support** of your church or fellowship
- Do get **prayer** support from friends. Someone **praying for you** when you are at the night shelter will help you
- Do show interest in each individual
- Address clients by first names and give them your first name only
- Be very careful about **touching** people. What might seem a harmless gesture to most of us could be taken completely differently by one of the guests
- Do offer a handshake but **refrain from hugging** as it may be misunderstood

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Don'ts

- Do not **judge** anyone
- Do not **argue** with people
- Do not talk about **politics** or at least be careful and avoid disagreement
- Do not ask too many questions Don't '**pry**'
- Do not leave **valuables** in accessible or visible places (e.g. mobiles, laptops, microphones)
- **Do not give money** (no exceptions) - we can organise Travel Warrants or small payments for specifics, but cash will get spent on drugs!
- Do not **naively believe** anything you are told - addicts notoriously live in a world of their own imagining
- Do not be scared to **ask** a member of staff about anything bothering you, no matter how trivial it may seem. That's what we are here for.
- Do not be scared to **make suggestions** or criticisms, we will be glad to listen
- Do not **forget** why we are here and who we are serving! (**Jesus** that is!)
- **Never** give out your surname, address or phone number or details about your day to day business
- **Should you feel led to stay in touch, buy a dedicated pay as you go mobile**
- **Never** take or invite a guest to your own home – if you feel you have good reason – *talk to FCG first!*
- **Never** give or promise financial support
- **Do not** give out your address or phone number to any guest
- **Do not** offer to look after guests **belongings**.
- **Do not arrange to see a guest beyond the context of the night shelter.....**

The advice of FCG is that you **do not pursue contact beyond the night shelter**. If you believe that you have **exceptional circumstances** talk to the FCG Co-ordinator. Even after a few weeks of having got to know guests, you will still likely be unaware of the **background history** of individuals. They may well try to **manipulate** you. Do not put yourself in danger.

Note to Pastors / Church staff

FCG of course do not have the right to tell you how to behave towards people coming onto your property, especially if guests attend a church service on a Sunday. However, we would strongly request that you hesitate before offering any form of assistance, inviting "guests" home etc. until after B4N has run its course.

If you have a situation where you want to help a B4N guest, please do feel free to ring us to ask for advice.

We cannot of course ask you not to let staff on the premises who have not received B4N training. However, might we respectfully suggest that such staff are given a copy of this handbook to read, so as to understand the challenges and recommendations.

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Over the years that Housing Justice Church Night Shelters environment has generally been calm and welcoming and thankfully there have been no violent incidents. With that in mind however, it is important to recognize 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 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 Core Team and various churches 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.



Prayer

We recommend above all else that each evening the team meets to pray and asks the Holy Spirit to bring peace into the building for the night. We cannot emphasise enough how much God must figure in our Risk Assessment. Experience shows us that even the most belligerent and angry person can be stilled just by sensing God's presence in a building. Please be sensitive to non-Christians on your team.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” [Proverbs:15:1]



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 recognized 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.

In responding to violence or potential violence, one's 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 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.

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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.
- 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 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.
- 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 guests should be used, but 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 first aid where necessary
- Providing reassurance and helping everyone to calm down
- Recording details of the incident as quickly as possible, please include names and times. Full statements will be taken at another time.
- 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 in the morning with the WNS Coordinator
- Consider providing 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.

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Further Safety matters and lessons learned

The really good news from every year is that there were some incidents, but they were managed. No-one was harmed. Everyone, we think without fail, has had an enjoyable experience of the shelter, whether guest or host. Many guests were found permanent accommodation through the interaction we facilitated with St Mungo's. For full details see the reports on our previous years.

Drug related issues - Please see Appendix 1

Alcohol

As much as we would like to say that no alcohol is allowed on the premises, the fact is that many will bring alcohol in concealed about their person or in their bag. We have to accept that "what comes in the bag stays in the bag" and "what the eye doesn't see!"

Rigidly apply the handing in of bags and supervised access of bags if requested during the evening / night.

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Some feedback and observations

“The guests have been a source of joy for us. All our contact volunteers (as opposed to our ‘behind the scenes’ folk) have spoken of the pleasure they have had in meeting the guests. Rightly it was suggested the guests may not remember us nor could we expect to have meaningful relationships with them. However, they have made an impact on us, for which we give thanks to God. We are richer people as a consequence of meeting them.”

[David Shaw – Wesley Methodist Church](#)

The whole team agrees it was a great resource for us and would like to see it continue!

Hope all is good with you.

All the best

Helen

Helen Arnold

Manager

Reading Street Outreach Team

St Mungo's Broadway

2015

“The Volunteer Handbook is the best I have encountered - it is really readable in lay-out and style, and gives a clear background as to why and how the Shelter runs, as well as very practical lists of dos and don'ts for the volunteers to follow.”

“The volunteer handbook is a particularly comprehensive and useful document. The policies were more specific and practical in content than some shelters which made them particularly useful for volunteers to refer to and apply. The policies and procedures felt more like those of a well-established Shelter rather than one only in its first pilot year of opening, which reflected the experience in this field of the project manager and others in the team.”

“The Project Manager's proactive work securing the engagement of St Mungo's means that their staff attend the Shelter during the morning resulting in good communication and more seamless service provision, with likely better outcomes for guests.”

“The biblical basis for running the Shelter, and the emphasis on prayer to underpin its smooth running are a good model for other church-based Shelters to consider.”

The Shelter was very welcoming, with care given to making the Shelter homely too (“Where is the matching pillow case for this duvet?!”) so it brings together a clear safe professionalism with a friendly, individual personal approach.

Rachel Makin

Quality Mark Partner with Housing Justice (2015)

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Appendix

Lessons learned from 2015/16

The really good news from January 2015 was that there were some incidents, but the training paid off in that they were managed. No-one was harmed. Everyone, we think without fail, had an enjoyable experience of the shelter, whether guest or host. Many guests were found permanent accommodation through the interaction we facilitated with St Mungo's. Some of us put on a little weight!

Drug related issues

1) Overdose

We had one incident in which a guest arrived one evening seriously under the influence of drugs. It transpired that he had not used in quite a while, had relapsed and therefore overdosed. The team handled the situation very calmly. Once he had collapsed they realised the seriousness of the situation, put him in the recovery position and telephoned for an ambulance. A phone call was also made to the Director since this was considered a serious incident, i.e. potentially life-threatening. The incident was then recorded properly on paper. All was well.

Lesson learned = stay calm and do what needs to be done.

2) Needles (Pins)

A needle (pin) was found in bedding one morning. We had warned that this was a possible danger in our training and **Safety Gloves** had been purchased and were in use, as was the Sharps Box.

Lesson learned = Always use safety gloves when taking bedding apart. It is only too easy to become casual or indeed feel that wearing the gloves is being overly careful. It isn't!

3) Use of drugs in toilets

We knew before we started last year that this would be a very thorny issue and much discussion occurred even before we opened. We have to accept that many of our guests will be active users. They are addicted and will use whilst B4N is running. We neither want to be perceived as judgemental nor permissive. It has to be made clear that drugs are not to be used on the premises.

Malc Peirce personally experienced one incident of a gentleman going to the toilet and still being there 20 minutes later. Knocking on the door, reminding, nagging didn't do much good, however it did make it clear that we were suspicious that he was injecting, which it subsequently became obvious that he was!

Lessons learned = Toilet use must be supervised, but there is no easy answer, it is a difficult and delicate matter.

The one person at a time rule is well worth applying.

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Theft / Security

Phone

The first year, we had a guest's phone stolen early on. He had not wanted to hand it in for safe-keeping and kept it by his bed. In fact we really had no proof that he had had a phone in the first place!

Phone chargers and extension leads are provided for the venue to charge up guests phones overnight.

Lesson learned = Insist that phones are handed in, quoting this as your reason.

Microphones

In a much more serious incident, two very valuable radio microphones were stolen from one venue.

Lesson Learned = Lock away anything of value

Alcohol

As much as we would like to say that no alcohol is allowed on the premises, the fact is that many will bring alcohol in concealed about their person or in their bag. We have to accept that "what comes in the bag stays in the bag" and "what the eye doesn't see!"

Lesson Learned = Insist on the **handing in of bags** and **supervised access** of bags if requested during the night.

Bags

Do not allow guests into the room / cupboard where bags are stored.

Late Arrivals

As the days past by in 2015 some of our guests began to try it on with arriving late, or rather going out after eating and coming back later. This became problematic for night staff who felt vulnerable once the Street Pastor and other volunteers had gone. As anticipated, some of the guys wanted to go off to score or to beg and come back at midnight! They simply have to understand that they have a choice to make - a night's sleep, or a night on the streets. We have to enforce the 10.00 o'clock last entry rule rigidly for the sake of everyone. It will only take a couple of enforcements for guests to believe us, just as it only takes a couple of non-enforcements for them not to believe us!

In 2016 we had far fewer problems with late arrivals due to enforcing the rule very rigidly from the start. That said we did make **one major concession** at the request of St Mungo's and as a result engaged with a hard-line rough sleeper, got him off the street and into long-term hostel accommodation.

We have to enforce the 10.00 o'clock last entry rule **as rigidly as we can** for the sake of fairness to everyone.

Complaints?

On a light note, most of the complaints we received were about the food being better at one venue than another!

On the whole the only real complaint that was picked up was that in 2015 one or two volunteers spoke to guests in a rather patronising way. This undermined the overall sense that guests were generally treated as equals and valued. We haven't heard of anyone complaining that they were preached at, which is good and what we hope for. However there were some really good spiritual conversations that occurred.

General Lesson Learned = Be nice. Be polite. Listen. Don't be bossy. Don't patronise!

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