

1. BEING A LEAD VOLUNTEER AND ORGANISING YOUR NIGHT SHELTER

What does a Lead Volunteer Do?

We suggest it is important to have at least **two** Lead Volunteers to share the role and responsibility. It is a most rewarding role, but quite 'full-on' and time-consuming, so sharing is a necessity and a help. As Lead Volunteers you:

- recruit volunteers for your week(s) and organise a rota of 'who does what, when'.
- make sure each volunteer has a copy of the WYDAN Night Shelter Volunteer Guidelines, so they know the 'house rules' which make for a successful Shelter.
- monitor how things are going, for example by opening up in the evening and locking up in the morning and by being contactable by volunteers throughout the week. You will also find it helpful to get to know the guests by being there on some evenings.
- keep an eye on provisions for breakfast, tea, coffee, sugar and organise top up as needed.
- hold the shelter phone (or organise someone to hold it for specific days/times). You (or they) may receive new referrals from the referral agencies and messages from guests.

You will have plenty of support from the Night Shelter Manager and members of the Night Shelter Steering Group, and will always have someone on call to contact if you have questions or a problem arises.

What do we need to provide?

1. Accommodation which is available from about 5pm to 9am next day. This means:

- A room/rooms big enough to hold 10 beds + a chair beside each bed
- Washing facilities & at least two toilets
- A separate place/kitchen in which to prepare food
- An area in which to eat the food and in which to relax, socialise
- (*if possible*) A shower - which could be in a nearby location

2. Volunteers to fill various roles (for details, see Sheet 3 'Night Shelter Roles')

- *Daily:* Welcomers; Cooks; Socialisers; Overnights; Breakfast makers.

The evening moves from a welcome, to the evening meal, to socialising – chatting and playing games (dominoes and Jenga are popular), to a (usually) peaceful night's sleep, then to breakfast the next morning.

- *Occasional:* Someone to wash bedding from the previous venue during the week; Someone to wash guests' personal belongings; A few people to be drivers to take the guests to the next host on the final Monday evening.

There must always be at least two people with the guests. This is because volunteers are not DBS checked, so for safeguarding reasons no one person should be alone with a guest.

3. Finance The provision of the venue is, of course, the most amazing help.

In addition, there could be expenses for:

- toiletries (eg. small toothpaste, toothbrush, safety razors, soap)
- food for breakfast, lunch sandwiches, snacks, fruit
- evening meal - evening meal cooks are often willing to provide their food themselves
- general expenses eg. phone calls, toilet paper, miscellaneous
- shower passes (if applicable); bus passes – guests are given one weekly bus pass each (currently £17 to £22.50 a week). If your venue can contribute this, that is a huge help, but WYDAN will support this expense.

4. Compliance with 'official' requirements

- Your venue probably has relevant policies as part of its responsibilities. WYDAN has its own version of Health and Safety, Food Hygiene; Vulnerable Adults; Alcohol and Drugs; Prevention of Violence; Equal Opportunities; and Complaints policies. A copy of each of these will be sent to you, and a paper version is in the shelter Handbook.
- Venue insurance which covers sleeping overnight. This may need to be added to your venue's insurance. (see *Sheet 6 'Possible answers to Insurers' Questions'*).
- A Risk Assessment (see the example included in the pack).
- A Fire Safety assessment (go online to West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service for information and their Fire Safety Risk Assessment Form FSFRM058A (May 2011)).
- A fully stocked First Aid Kit (suggested list on last page of *Prevention of Violence Policy*).

What about the Guests?

- We host destitute asylum-seeking men who are over 18 years old. The maximum number a night is 10 guests. They could be from several different countries, for example Syria, Iraq, Eritrea or Congo. Some will have a good level of the English language and some will not. Some will be new arrivals in the UK while others may have been here for 10 years or more.
- Each guest is referred from a referral agency. Ours are PAFRAS (Positive Action for Asylum Seekers and Refugees), British Red Cross and Migrant Help/Urban House. These agencies have a case worker for each of their service users. The agency makes a risk assessment to see whether the potential guest is suitable for staying in the Night Shelter. The agencies are aware that we do not accept anyone who uses drugs or alcohol, has anger issues, or significant mental health issues. When they have a referral, the agency rings the Lead Volunteer (or whoever is in charge of the phone in the daytime) to ask if the shelter has room. If yes, they give details of name, age, country of origin, level of English, any special dietary requirements, phone number. You put the name, country of origin and phone number in the General Log so that volunteers know who is staying that night and can contact him if necessary. Other details go in the Confidential Log. An electronic copy of the referral form will have been sent to the Night Shelter Manager and Chair of the NSSG.
- Guests should have been told the Night Shelter rules before they come, but it is a good idea to go over them and make sure they have signed them. The relevant sheets are in the Lead Volunteers' Pack. You will also need to introduce them to your facilities and tell them any specific rules relating to your venue.
- Guests are brought to the Shelter on your first night and later guests are provided with help to find it. Their bus passes are to help them get to and from the shelter. You will need to keep a clear record of the date on which a guest is given bus pass money. Ask him to sign receipt of it in the General Log. It also helps if you enter for the following week that (*Name of guest*) is due his next bus pass money on (*day of the week*). This helps avoid any confusion and enables people to know when to have the bus pass money ready. Each guest only gets ONE amount of bus pass money a week.
- It helps to establish a (flexible) routine to suit your circumstances. For example, guests arrive between 5.00/7.00 pm and leave at approx 8.30am the following morning, Monday to Saturday. Establish what time you want to serve the evening meal (eg. 7.30pm). You can use the same timing on Sundays, or vary it as suits your venue. There are fewer facilities open in town on Sundays, so if you can extend your opening hours it will be much appreciated by the guests. Guests like to be able to give something back, so if you have a project they could join in with (eg painting, gardening) that would help. Of course you are not obliged to host during the day on Sunday - it is up to the circumstances of your venue.

What support can we expect?

- Katrina Burton is the WYDAN Night Shelter Manager. She and the Night Shelter Steering Group members work to support each shelter, ensuring someone is always on the end of the phone, visiting you, training and supporting volunteers.
- Each Shelter has access to the **General Log** and volunteers are encouraged to put information in this, especially the names of guests and volunteers each day (needed for records of what we have done), and comments on how things have gone. You can learn about previous weeks from what others have written.
- We also have a **Confidential Log**, which should not be on public view and should be kept secure. In it you as Lead Volunteer can write any personal things about a guest which are relevant to his interaction or health but which are personal, and should be kept confidential. Such things should not be put in the General Log. Confidentiality about individuals is very important (see the Volunteer Guidelines, *sheet 4* in this Pack).
- There is a **Handbook**, with information about help for asylum seekers in Leeds; useful if you get queries about where to go and what to do. The guests are very resourceful, some know Leeds well, others are new to Leeds. They help each other. The Handbook also contains a paper copy of this Lead Volunteers' Information pack, and gives information on asylum seekers and the immigration system. There is a **Shelter Phone** used to take referrals, calls from guests, contact the Shelter Manager or NSSG members or volunteers and be contacted by them. There is always someone on call in case of emergencies. General Log, Handbook, Phone and Confidential Log go from shelter to shelter.
- *Sheet 5* in this Pack gives detailed information about what bedding to expect, and the system of its use. On the first Monday of your shelter, the beds, bedding, and towels will be delivered in the morning. Existing guests' suitcases will also be delivered if they are moving on with the shelter. You will then be able to make up the beds for the number of guests you are expecting (the information should be in the General Log). The previous week's used bedding & towels will also be delivered, for your volunteers to wash, so it will be ready for the next venue. You pass on your used bedding & towels in a similar way at the end of your shelter.
- It is very useful to make contact with a previous Lead Volunteer, and discuss their experience of running a shelter. If you can arrange to visit the shelter before yours, you will also be able to meet the guests, and enable them to meet you.

Creating a Night Shelter is very much a cooperative venture. Many shelters have found that asking for help from local businesses, other churches, mosques, gurdwaras, and community associations can help make the shelter into a transforming local event. It is worth a try!