

**WYCOMBE  
HOMELESS  
CONNECTION**



# **WINTER NIGHT SHELTER 2026 VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Revised and updated October 2025



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# 1. Welcome

Volunteers are an important and valued part of Wycombe Homeless Connection. We appreciate that you've chosen to volunteer with us. We will do our best to make your volunteer experience enjoyable and rewarding. We aim to be flexible and supportive. We believe that the volunteer relationship is built on trust and mutual understanding.

The handbook has been prepared to give you some essential information about the WHC winter Night Shelter. While you'll go through most of the content of this handbook at training, it contains a lot of the information you'll need to refer back to and spend more time with. Content includes schedules, videos, handouts and more will be on our shelter webpages whenever possible.

If you have any questions about the content of the handbook, please contact our Volunteering Coordinator.

[www.wyhoc.org.uk/night-shelter](http://www.wyhoc.org.uk/night-shelter)

At the above webpage you can

- Volunteer for the shelter
- Login to our volunteer system, CERVIS where you can manage your shelter shifts and more
- Find training videos and this handbook
- Find out about the goods we need to make the shelter run
- Donate and support our work with gifts of money
- See the impact your volunteering makes and much more...

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[www.wyhoc.org.uk](http://www.wyhoc.org.uk)  
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Registered charity number: 1156211

## 2. About WHC

### What is homelessness?

Less than 1% of people who are homeless sleep on the street. The rest is 'hidden homelessness' where people 'sofa surf' with family and friends or sleep in hostels, squats, on public transport or other insecure and unsuitable accommodation. So homelessness includes people living in temporary and emergency accommodation.

### Homelessness is life-threatening

People who are homeless are likely to die decades before the average person who is housed. The average age of death for a homeless person is in the mid-40s, compared to around 80 for the rest of the population. The average age of death while homeless for women is even lower, at just 43 years.

People who live on the street are almost 20 times more likely to be victims of violence. They are almost 10 times as likely to take their own lives.

### Every year, hundreds of people are forced into homeless in south Buckinghamshire

Homelessness is most likely to happen to people in poverty, as they have no reserves to fall back but in a cost of living crisis, more and more people face homelessness.

The causes of homelessness are wide ranging: Loss or lack of a job, breakdown of a relationship or family, increasing housing costs and no matching increase in wages. People leaving prison or the armed forces may have nowhere to go. People escaping abusive and violent relationships may have nowhere to turn. People can get into rent arrears, a private tenancy might be ended with people being unfairly or illegally evicted from their home. Often homelessness results from a complex mix of these experiences all happening to someone in short succession.

People may have been living in the UK for a long time but have not been able to navigate the immigration system so cannot demonstrate their right to live here leaving them outside of the social support system. Homelessness can cause severe pressure but it can also be caused by it too. Pressures can include poor physical and mental health.

This is all happening while there is a severe shortage of affordable housing and an increasingly complicated and unforgiving welfare system.

### There isn't enough help.

Some people who are homeless are entitled to a place in emergency and temporary accommodation provided by the council but this is in short supply.

Local authorities have a duty to find a home for families or individuals who fit what is called 'priority need' criteria. People who are young, old, ill, pregnant, vulnerable or adults with dependent children usually will be helped by the council, but they'll only be housed if they meet other criteria as well and there is a severe shortage of suitable accommodation.

The law on who is entitled to access this support and working out who is entitled to what is open to competing interpretations. It is hard to navigate the system at the best of times, let alone when you are in a housing crisis.

**Our winter Night Shelter offers a warm, safe place to stay for people who do not qualify for, or are excluded from all other support.**

### What we do

Wycombe Homeless Connection believes that every person who is homeless in our community has worth and should have a home no matter what their situation.

We provide a range of free services to help people who are homeless as well as to help people avoid homelessness including emergency accommodation; a support centre that offers wide ranging help and advice; community outreach walks to connect people to our services; housing legal clinics where people facing a housing crisis can get specialist support to avoid illegal and unfair eviction; help to access health services and much more.

### **Our mission**

- To help people who are homeless or facing homelessness by:
- Preventing homelessness before it starts
- Reducing harm for people who are homeless
- Helping house people who are homeless
- Defending the rights of people who are homeless or facing homelessness

**Thank you for being part of this mission.**

### 3. Introduction to volunteering

Volunteers have a vital role in the leadership, development and delivery of our all our activities and none of what we do is possible without them.

WHC has a small staff team of specialist support workers and homelessness prevention workers plus a team of fundraisers, and the business team.

Over 250 volunteers are needed to make the Winter Night Shelter happen.

#### Accessibility

We strive to make sure our volunteering opportunities are accessible but some roles at our shelter, require the ability to lift and carry. This is outlined as far as possible in the role descriptions but if you have any questions or would like to discuss what we can do to enable your volunteering, contact our Volunteering Coordinator [volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk) or 01494 447699.

#### Volunteer agreement: Our commitment to you, your commitment to us

When you agree to volunteer with us, you agree to act in line with our volunteer agreement. It sets out the expectations from you as a volunteer and what support you can expect from us.

#### **As a volunteer we ask that you:**

- Have a willingness to work within our values, and to respect others regardless of differences in faith or background.
- Strive for the best that you can do and complete your volunteering activities with dedication and commitment.
- Go to any briefings and training that we think will help you in your role.
- Be positive about and support the work of Wycombe Homeless Connection.
- Are familiar with, and have the ability to work within, our policies and guidelines, especially regarding health & safety and safeguarding procedures.
- Act responsibly and within the law.
- Maintain confidentiality of our activities, the people in our care, our team and our procedures.
- Respect appropriate personal, emotional, physical, time and role boundaries as detailed in this handbook and in your training.
- Value and respect the rights of our clients.
- Work in partnership with staff and volunteers to make society a better place for our beneficiaries.
- Let the Volunteering Coordinator know if you are having any problems or if you have any complaints, concerns or feedback including safeguarding concerns
- Meet agreed time commitments and give reasonable notice when you're not available so that arrangements can be made.

## **In return, we will:**

- Introduce you to how our organisation works and your role within it.
- Give information about our work, policies and procedures.
- Offer training and support for your role.
- Reimburse agreed expenses.
- Strive to resolve any concerns fairly and reasonably, applying our complaints procedure when needed.
- Respect and listen to your feedback, and keep you informed of any changes.
- Ensure your health, safety and welfare.
- Apply our equal opportunities policy.
- Encourage a positive and supportive volunteering experience.
- This agreement is in honour only. It is not intended to be a legally binding contract and either Wycombe Homeless Connection or the volunteer can end the agreement at any time.

## **Our values**

**We are committed to there being zero tolerance to leaving people on the street.**

**We believe there should be enough homes for everyone.**

**We will do everything we can to prevent anyone ever losing their home.**

Our Christian faith guides everything we do and inspires our four core values. We welcome staff, volunteers, and serve people, of all faiths and none. We are happy to explain our faith but we do not promote religion nor evangelise. We serve and work with people of all faiths and none and respect the diversity of people we serve. Our staff and volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives.

### **Compassion**

We treat every person with compassion, caring for the whole person, taking account of an individual's physical, emotional and spiritual needs, especially those who have been harmed by homelessness, or are facing homelessness.

### **Respect**

We respect and value every person as created in God's image and will treat them with love, dignity and kindness.

### **Trust**

We build trust acting responsibly and with integrity in all we do, committing to achieve the best outcomes for every person we encounter and work with. We trust God will, through our supporters and community, provide all we need to do our work.

### **Teamwork**

We achieve more when we learn from and collaborate with others including the people we serve, our partners, our supporters, our staff and our volunteers.

### Information specific to volunteering at our winter Night Shelter project

All our volunteers need to be **over 18 years old** and will complete a **criminal record self-disclosure** form and depending on the role may undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Volunteers provide relevant **references** so we can make safe recruitment decisions.

**Mandatory training** is provided on important skills and procedures like safeguarding and health and safety. More **specific training** is offered where it is needed e.g. shift leaders and cooks. Some roles require very specific skills sets and these will be offered to those with those skills or that can be developed through training, mentoring and support.

To run safely, we rely on people to manage their availability using email and our online volunteer management system, **CERVIS**. Training on how to use CERVIS is provided.

Shelter volunteers can take on **multiple shifts and roles** but cannot do consecutive shifts on any one night. If you can offer multiple shifts and roles, offer the maximum, and our group leaders will assign you to where we need you the most.

As well as roles at the shelter venues, there are **daytime jobs** that need doing. If being up late isn't for you, have a look at our laundry and driver roles.

We ask that you try to **offer two shifts or more a month**, but if you really can only do one, please still register!

Please offer, if you can, an occasional **night shift** as these are very hard to fill!

### CERVIS: our volunteer database

Creating rotas for hundreds of people, in multiple different roles, trained in different tasks, taking on three shifts a night for 88 days, plus laundry and driver volunteers is a complex task!

We have an online database called **CERVIS** we use for managing the Night Shelter, other services and it holds and protects all our volunteer's personal data.

Group Leaders (volunteers) are volunteers, one for each venue, who organise the right people into the right shifts with the right training. They will be the person you contact if you can't attend your shift at late notice and they'll work on finding a reserve and letting the shift leader know. Details of these will be circulated.

You will be trained in how to log in to CERVIS, offer the roles and shifts you want to do and how to amend them if your plans change. There is also a user guide for CERVIS on our website. [www.wyhoc.org.uk/volunteer/cervis-portal](http://www.wyhoc.org.uk/volunteer/cervis-portal)

## 4. Introduction to the Night Shelter

### How the shelter works

Our winter Night Shelter will be open in January, February and March 2026. People who are living on the street in south Buckinghamshire, and who have no other options, will be offered shelter.

People who are forced to sleep on the streets in south Bucks and are unlikely to be offered any statutory help can be offered a place at the shelter. Our Services team will manage this process in collaboration with other local agencies and the Council. Priority and risk assessments are undertaken to ensure the safety of our guests, volunteers and staff. If there are more people than we can safely shelter, we can explore other options.

The shelter is kindly hosted at churches in or close to High Wycombe town centre. We use rooms and the kitchen, set up beds, a place to eat and an area for socialising. We will also use the calm and warm environment the shelter provides to work with some of our guests to help them find a home for good and do everything we can to avoid anyone having to return to life on the street.

People who may need to use the shelter will be identified by our support workers at our support centre, on outreach walks, working with our partners and via our homelessness helpline. Our support centre team will work with people to understand their options.

If they need to be invited to the shelter, we will undertake some safety checks and the guest will be given instructions on how to get to the shelter. In 2026, some of the venues are outside of the town centre and not in walking distance from where most of our guests reside and where the shelter is. On these nights, we will arrange for transport for the guests from Wycombe town centre to the venue.

Guests are assessed for fitness to be admitted to the Night Shelter either at the venue by our Night Shelter coordinator and a welcome team, or on the out of town nights, at the WHC office before being taken to the venue.

At each of the venues, the evening team prepare areas for welcome, sleeping, eating, and socialising. The night shelter coordinator will arrive with the shelter van with everything needed for the night.

Where the facilities exist, guests will be able to get their laundry done and have showers. The guests, staff and volunteers share a hot evening meal and there is time for socialising, laundry, showers, resting.

At 11pm lights go off and the night team takes over making sure everyone gets a good night's sleep.

At 6.30am it's time for the morning team to arrive and get ready to help guests wake up, have a light breakfast, and either leave the shelter or be given transport back to town. The

team then clear up the venue and a night shelter coordinator or other staff member will arrive with the shelter van which is loaded and taken back to the WHC office.

Twice a week, laundry is collected at the office by the laundry team, washed and dried and returned on the next laundry day for future use.

### Venues

**Sunday night – Monday morning:** Christ the Servant King, Booker

**Monday night – Tuesday morning:** Wycombe Community Church, Desborough

**Tuesday night – Wednesday morning:** Oakridge Baptist Church, Desborough

**Wednesday night – Thursday morning:** St Augustine's Church, Wycombe town centre

**Thursday night - Friday morning:** The HUB, Union Baptist, Wycombe town centre

**Friday night – Saturday morning:** Wesley Methodist Church, Wycombe town centre.

**Saturday night – Sunday morning:** St Andrews Church, Hatters Lane

See our website for up to date parking information for the venues.

### Shift patterns and activities

**Evening shift: 6.00pm – 10pm, at venue with shift leader, cook, assistant cook, hosts.**

6pm to 6:45pm: Volunteers, under the direction of the shift leader, prepare the venue including preparing meal, getting out tables and chairs, laying tables, making beds etc.

6:45pm: The shift team gets together for briefing by the Shift Leader. Fire drill explained. Any issues/ things to watch out for are covered. Shift leader allocates post dinner duties such as supervision of guests during smoking breaks. Close with prayer (or time of quiet for those wishing to opt out of prayer time).

7pm: Doors open; guests are admitted by on duty Night Shelter Coordinator and a volunteer. They are booked in and reminded of the rules. Teas and coffees are served over the course of the evening.

8pm: The meal is served with guests and volunteers eating together. This is an important part of creating a welcoming atmosphere. Volunteers are asked to mingle in sitting down with the guests.

9pm: After clearing away, social activities are organised for those who would like to spend time with others.

**Night shift: 9.30pm – 7am, at venue with a shift leader and 3 hosts.**

If you are on the overnight shift you will get a few hours' sleep in rotation with other volunteers. A bed and bed pack is provided but you might want to bring your own.

Two volunteers remain awake and within sight of the guests at all times.

9:30pm: Handover from evening to night shift. Night shift is briefed by shift leader.

There is a supervised smoking break for guests between 10pm and 11pm at the discretion of the shift leader. The building is secured for the night. Volunteers ensure that everyone is comfortable and settled in for the night.

11pm - Lights out. All guests and volunteers will adhere to lights out and quiet. Some guests may struggle to do this, especially at the start of their stay and should be dealt with gently. Persevere and do not encourage them to stay up talking.

Anyone arriving late at night unless notified on the guest list, including the police, should NOT be admitted without first contacting the on call staff member who will advise

### **Morning shift: 6.30am – 8am at venue with shift leader and hosts**

6:30am: Handover from night to morning shift.

7:00am: Guest are woken up

By 7.30am Breakfast materials laid out for guests to help themselves and hot drinks served. Some guests may leave early for work/before breakfast so this can be laid out the night before or earlier.

7.30am: Guests help the team tidy away the bed packs. Dirty linens packed into laundry bags and bed packs topped up with fresh linens. All equipment packed onto the van which is taken back to the office.

8:00am: Guests must leave premises and hall is tidied up and locked. For out of town venues a taxi will arrive at 7.45 am.

### **Daytime shifts: Laundry task, at office, home and elsewhere**

We host up to 12 guests each night but not all their linen needs to be laundered each day. Laundry will bedsheets, pillow cases, hand and body towels. Our laundry volunteers will be responsible for washing and drying bedding and towels. You'll either deliver it to a launderette, or wash and dry a portion of the load at home. You'll return according by the next laundry day so it can be packed and loaded on the van to go the shelter.

## 5. Shelter based roles and responsibilities

It takes hundreds of people to put on our Night Shelter including WHC staff and volunteers from across our community.

### Key WHC Staff

**Services Manager:** Our services manager is responsible for making sure the shelter happens and will lead the project.

**Night Shelter Coordinator:** Sarah joined us as the Night Shelter coordinator in March 2025, she has since become a member of staff who focus is on the Night Shelter. During the shelter itself, she will be at the support centre in the afternoon doing checks, and making sure the logistics are all sorted. The days she will be at the shelter, she will take the van to the venue for the evening shift to help it get started. They'll stay for the evening shift, making sure guests are offered all the support and advice they need.

**WHC Support Worker (resettlement).** Hope Ilori joined WHC in the summer of 2024. Her focus is on helping people move on from the street, emergency and temporary accommodation into a home for good. Her focus during the shelter will be on working with our guests to make sure, as far as possible, none of them have to return to the street at the end of their stay. She'll be visiting the venues to work with our guests.

**Volunteering Coordinator:** They are responsible for making sure all our volunteers are inducted and trained for their roles and is there to offer help and pastoral support.

### Volunteer roles

#### Group Leader

They use the offers of help volunteers make in CERVIS to create the rotas, making sure the right people are in the right place at the right time. They'll help if you need to change or miss a shift for any reason.

#### Shift Leader (SL)

**Shift leaders are identified as suitable for this role and will receive extra training.**

They oversee the shelter volunteer teams making sure everything gets done safely and well. They work an evening, night or morning shift.

They are responsible for making sure shifts runs smoothly and safely. They'll carry out a safety and info briefing, allocate tasks to volunteers and make sure it works! Shift-leader training is provided. There are three shift leader roles: evening, night and morning.

- SLs will be provided with a list of volunteers and back-ups who are on your shift by the Group Leader for your venue. You may need to call back-ups in case another volunteer is unable to attend last minute.

- SLs brief volunteers about the shift ahead, along with the Night Shelter coordinator if they are at the venue. Your brief will contain information and update session at the beginning of each shift, giving the volunteer team all necessary information about the guests, tasks and activities. SL will make sure the Night Shelter action log is updated at the end of your shift. SL will hand over relevant detail to the following shift leader if there is one.
- SLs allocate roles to volunteers and ensure each task is completed and supervised whether directly or through other volunteers e.g. cooks.
- SL is responsible for overseeing health and safety, and safeguarding, at the shift, and ensuring the premises are left clean at the end.
- SLs make decisions about excluding a guest if needed if the Night Shelter coordinator is not on site. SL can liaise with the on call staff support to help make the decisions.

### **Shelter Host**

Hosts are part of the general volunteer team taking on an evening, night or morning shift. There are a range of tasks and a Shift Leader will allocate them. All shifts will include creating a warm and supportive atmosphere, supervising activities like smoking breaks, showers, laundry and helping as directed in case of a fire or a first aid emergency.

### **Shift patterns**

#### **Evening, 6pm – 10:00pm**

- Set up venue including laying out beds, towels, tables.
- Engage with briefing from Night Shelter coordinator and shift leader.
- Welcome and check in guests
- Socialise and share a meal with our guests
- Some venues are outside of Wycombe town centre so you may be asked to travel with the Night Shelter coordinator to the Support Centre in Wycombe. You'll meet our guests, do some admission checks and help them into taxis to get to the venue. You'll travel back to the venue with the coordinator for the rest of the shift.

#### **Night, 9.30pm – 7am**

- Engage with briefing from the shift leader.
- You'll make sure guests are settled for the night and that there is a quiet atmosphere so people can sleep.
- Lay out breakfast items that guests will eat or take away with them.
- You'll sleep in 3-4 hour shifts so two volunteers are awake at all times to ensure guest safety and manage arising matters.

#### **Morning, 6.30am – 8.00am**

- Engage with briefing from night shift leader.
- Help serve breakfast.
- Ensure guests are awake and ready to leave the shelter on time.
- Sort linen and bed bags

- Clean and tidy venue and help load the shelter van.

### Cook

We offer a hot meal in the evening of two courses with vegetarian options and taking into account any allergies.

The cook works with an assistant cook and volunteers to prepare an evening meal, served at 8pm, for approximately 22 people include guests, volunteers and staff. They'll supervise the assistant cook and other volunteers. Cooks can prepare food at home and bring with you.

**IMPORTANT:** Cooks will have, or be trained to gain, the Level 2 Food Hygiene & Safety qualification. This involves online learning of a couple of hours.

#### Tasks include:

- Planning meals, shopping for ingredients.
- Liaising with shift leaders over meals and timings.
- Cleaning up after meals, the kitchen, store and/or dispose of leftover food.
- Making any records as required e.g. serving and cooked temperature of food, storage facility temperatures.
- Completing the food log form and give to shift leader/NS coordinator for the daily log

### Assistant Cook

The assistant cook helps the evening shift cook prepare and serve a hot two course meal, with a vegetarian option, for 22 people including guests, volunteers and staff. They'll arrive at 6pm and serve the meal at 8pm.

The assistant cook can also help with making the desert following the cook's guidance.

## 6. Training

### What's needed for different roles

**Module 1:** all WHC volunteers undertake our module 1 training programme. These are available on video and there are four to watch. You will be asked to watch these if needed.

- Introduction to WHC
- Introduction to safeguarding
- Handling data and GDPR principles

### Night Shelter training

To ensure the safety of our guests, volunteers and staff, and the smooth running of the shelter, there are a range of mandatory training courses for shelter volunteers depending on the role/s you take.

You will be invited to these trainings in person, or in a few instances online, and **they must be completed before you can start your role at the shelter.**

	Intro to the shelter	Safeguarding	CERVIS for the shelter	1 <sup>st</sup> Aid	Level 2 Food Hygiene	Shift leader training	Manual Handling
Shift leader	X	X	X	If needed		X	
Host	X	X	X	If needed			
Cook	X	X	X	If needed	X		
Assistant cook	X	X	X	If needed			
Laundry	X	X	X	If needed			
Driver	X	X	X				X

### Key info to support training

The areas of information below will be expanded on in your in-person training but these are handy reminders of the principles of what we will cover.

### Boundaries

#### Why is this important and what does it mean?

Volunteering at the Night Shelter will bring you into contact with our guests who are homeless and are relying on this vital project. You will be helping to make this project happen which puts you in a position of special responsibility.

You will meet people who may be vulnerable due to being homeless and other factors including substance misuse issues or mental health issues.

In this context, boundaries are limits on how you interact with our guests to keep both you and them safe.

#### What is being asked of you?

Here are some key examples of the boundaries which we are asking you to maintain:

- **Personal information:** Avoid sharing personal details about your life such as your full name, address or where you work.
- **Emotional boundaries:** Keep your emotional involvement in check as far as possible.
- **Physical boundaries:** Respect guests' personal space and avoid any physical contact that could be misinterpreted.
- **Time boundaries:** Stick to scheduled volunteer hours and do not plan any interactions outside of these hours.

- **Role boundaries:** Our trained staff focus on supporting guests with long-term needs. Volunteers have an important role at the Night Shelter, so please leave the specialised support to the team and avoid making promises about the help we can offer, which can leave people feeling very let-down if it turns out not to be possible.

You may find a guest trying to cross these boundaries. If this happens, politely decline and, if needed, ask the shift leader for help. Other volunteers will also have been trained to look out for you. We're a team!

### How can you help others?

If you notice a volunteer being asked personal questions, getting too emotionally involved, approached for a hug or asked to meet outside the shelter, please help them maintain their boundaries too. Here's how you can support:

- Ask them to help elsewhere and check if they're okay.
- Join the conversation to provide support.
- Report your concern to the shift leader.

### Who should you contact if you have questions?

If you have any further questions about boundaries please ask your shift leader to advise if you're on shift and ask our Volunteering Coordinator [volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk) outside of your shift.

## Confidentiality

### Why is this important and what does it mean?

During your time volunteering at the Night Shelter, you may hear personal information about our guests. We ask you to keep this confidential.

Keeping confidentiality is neither keeping a secret which is never shared with anyone nor is it passing on details unnecessarily. Confidentiality means that this information is shared only with the right people, when necessary, so they can perform their roles.

### What is being asked of you?

To maintain confidentiality, please ensure you do the following:

- Avoid sharing personal information about guests with anyone outside of WHC.
- Do not post any personal information about guests on social media.
- If a guest shares something you think would be helpful for WHC staff to know (but not critical), ask for their permission before passing it on.
- Share information with your shift leader or a WHC staff member if you believe there's a risk of harm to someone. In this case, you don't need permission to share, but it may still be helpful to discuss it with the guest first.

### How can you support others?

If you notice another volunteer sharing personal information about a guest inappropriately (whether accidentally or not), please gently remind them about the importance of confidentiality. If you believe information has been shared that could put someone at risk or if a volunteer continues to share personal information inappropriately, please report this to our Volunteering Coordinator at [volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk).

### Who should you contact if you're not sure?

If you have any further questions about confidentiality please ask your shift leader to advise if you're on shift and ask our volunteering Coordinator [volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.enquiries@wyhoc.org.uk) outside of your shift.

## Safeguarding

### Why is this important and what does it mean?

Safeguarding means protecting people from abuse, exploitation or neglect and it even includes self-neglect. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

At Wycombe Homeless Connection safeguarding is not an additional extra that we do, it is actually a core reason why we exist.

People who are homeless can be significantly more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect. This is partly because they are more likely to have challenges with poor mental and physical health, substance misuse and have often experienced complex trauma in their lives.

One of the main things people do to stay safe is to go into their home and close the door, this is not possible for people who don't have a home of their own which compounds the risks they face.

The Care Act 2014 lists ten types of abuse, exploitation or neglect:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect

### What is being asked of you?

As a Night Shelter volunteer you have a position of special responsibility so the first thing to consider is to ensure that you continue to maintain appropriate boundaries. You can avoid becoming compromised from a safeguarding point of view by doing this.

A concern could arise due to something you have witnessed, an allegation you have been told or overheard or a disclosure from someone who has suffered abuse or neglect or has perpetrated abuse or neglect.

**You MUST report any safeguarding concerns you have.** Speak to the shift leader on shift or a WHC staff member unless they are implicated in the safeguarding concern. If that is the case, please send you concern to one of our safeguarding contacts, see below.

Please take some time to read and become familiar with our safeguarding procedure which is available on our website both at [www.wyhoc.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.wyhoc.org.uk/safeguarding) and on our Night Shelter hub.

### **How can you support others?**

You can support other volunteers by reminding them about the WHC safeguarding policy and the need to maintain appropriate boundaries and reporting any concerns you have to the shift leader or to a WHC staff member.

### **Who should you contact if you're not sure?**

If you have any further questions about safeguarding, please ask your shift leader to advice if you're on shift or get in touch with our safeguarding team.

David Sparks, Safeguarding Trustee: [safeguarding.trustee@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding.trustee@wyhoc.org.uk)

James Boulton, Safeguarding Lead and our CEO: [safeguarding.lead@wyhoc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding.lead@wyhoc.org.uk)

Lola De-Lima, Deputy Safeguarding Lead and our Business and Finance Manager:  
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## Personal safety

We care about your safety whilst you're volunteering with us. We work as a team and have responsibilities towards each other. To play your part, please read the advice below:

- If it is your first time volunteering at a particular venue, let the shift leader know when you arrive at the venue. They will show you around and make sure you know the layout of the premises, especially the emergency exits.
- It is important that we have everyone on shift that we're expecting if we're going to run a safe project. If you are going to be late or cannot make your shift at late notice, please let the Group Leader for your venue know.
- When it comes to team work, we always support our guests as a team as well. You should be in pairs at least when interacting with guests. This helps us maintain appropriate boundaries and keeps everyone safe. Read the sections on safeguarding, boundaries and confidentiality for more information.

## Managing challenging situations and prevention of violence

We do not expect aggression or violence to be a frequent occurrence in the Night Shelter. To help minimise the risk even further and to prevent things escalating please familiarise yourself with the following guidelines.

### **To do in advance**

- Ensure that you listen carefully to the briefing and ask questions about anything you're not sure about. This will help you to be aware of any sensitivities or special circumstances you need to be aware of regarding expected guests.
- Ensure that you adhere to our policy about maintaining appropriate boundaries at all times. This includes working in pairs, avoiding sharing personal details about yourself, avoiding becoming overly emotionally involved with guests, avoiding physical contact with guests, not planning interactions with guests outside of your volunteering time with WHC and ensuring that you are clear about the boundaries of your role and don't attempt to go beyond it. If you do all this, you will help reduce the risk of a challenging situation significantly.
- Familiarise yourself with the guest rules which you'll be shown at your training session. If someone is not sticking to those they may be given a warning or they may be asked to leave by either the shift leader or a staff member. You can assist by reporting any concerns to a shift leader or staff member.

### **To do if a situation is occurring**

- If a shift leader or a staff member asks someone to leave and they don't, please call the police on 999 and explain what is happening. We don't expect this to be a

regular occurrence but if it does occur it is important to have the police on the way to assist before a situation escalates any further.

- The most important concern is to avoid anyone getting hurt. We do not ask our volunteers or staff members to put themselves in harm's way, in fact it's the opposite. If someone is being aggressive or starting to become violent it's important to move people away from that person. People being close by tends to make things worse and runs the risk of other people getting involved. As a team ask guests and any other volunteers to move away from a situation which is occurring while we wait for the emergency services to attend.
- If the shift leader decides that the incident requires assistance from the on-call staff member, they will make contact with them.

### To do afterwards

- If there has been an incident there is a prioritised check list of things we will need to do:
  1. Does anyone need first aid?
  2. Or do any other emergency services need to be contacted?
  3. Shift leaders or staff members will de-brief individuals and the team to ensure that anyone involved or who has witnessed the incident has a chance to talk about what has happened before they leave the shelter.
  4. A report will be made of what has happened. There will be incident report forms as part of the Night Shelter log-book, use one of these if possible but the main thing is just to make a factual record of what happened and leave this with the Night Shelter log book so that WHC staff can pick it up and read about what has occurred.

## Health and safety including manual handling

The guidance below covers both employees and volunteers in the night shelter.

Incorrect manual handling is one of the most common causes of injury at work. It causes work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) which account for over a third of all workplace injuries.

The relevant regulations require Wycombe Homeless Connection to:

- avoid the need for hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided; and
- reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In simplistic terms, ***PLEASE think before moving anything. Always consider your own health/safety first. Don't hesitate in asking for assistance.***

**Making an assessment:** Before moving anything you should assess the situation and your current ability to move items. Do:

- follow systems of work in place for safety
- use equipment provided for your safety properly
- cooperate with WHC on health and safety matters
- inform WHC if you identify hazardous handling activities, or see improvement opportunities
- take care to make sure your activities do not put yourself, or others at risk.

### **Good handling technique for lifting – practical tips:**

- **Think before lifting/handling.** Plan the lift. Where is the load going to be placed? Will help be needed with the load? Remove obstructions such as discarded wrapping materials. For a long lift, consider resting the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.
- **Adopt a stable position.** The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground). Be prepared to move your feet during the lift to maintain their stability. Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult.
- **Get a good hold.** Where possible, the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with hands only. Start in a good posture. At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting). Don't flex the back any further while lifting. This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.

- **Keep the load close to the waist.** Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible while lifting. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.
- **Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways,** especially while the back is bent. Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips. Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.
- **Keep the head up when handling.** Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely. Move smoothly. The load should not be jerked or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury. Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed. There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.
- **Put down, then adjust.** If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position.

## 8. Key administrative information for volunteers

### Expenses

Volunteers for the Night Shelter can fill in an expense claim form to cover the cost of their parking and transport to get to and from the Night Shelter from home and for any reasonable expenses incurred providing food for the Night Shelter.

### Cooking expenses

Volunteers providing food for the Night Shelter are able to get their costs reimbursed through the expenses process. Bank details need to be provided, if it is a first claim, as reimbursement will normally be made by BACS.

### How to claim

Please ask your shift leader for an expense claim form, this can then be handed back to them and will be brought back to the office with the Night Shelter log book. Or you can complete the online expense form. Receipts should be provided as proof of purchase. The Volunteering Coordinator will assess the claim and arrange for payment.

### Ending your volunteering

If for any reason you would like to stop volunteering at the Night Shelter, we ask you to let us know as soon as possible. Volunteering does not entail any binding agreement. Please be aware that if you step down from volunteering at WHC you may have to re-apply in the future.

### Problems

Most of our volunteers find that volunteering at WHC is an enjoyable and positive experience. Any issues which occur are normally resolved quickly between the volunteer and their shift leader or staff contact.

However, sometimes issues arise and complaints are made by other volunteers, staff or guests that relate to a volunteer's capability (a volunteer's ability to undertake a role), performance (how well a volunteer is performing the role) or conduct (behaviour when taking part in volunteering).

A volunteer arrangement is binding in honour only. Therefore, neither notification, nor the completion of any procedure is required to end any agreement. However, WHC greatly values the efforts of volunteers and has a responsibility to treat them as fairly as possible.

If a volunteer is unhappy with their treatment by a member of staff or volunteer, they should speak to the Volunteering Coordinator in the first instance or our CEO if the difficulty is with the Volunteering Coordinator. This should be responded to within 7 days. All parties will focus on the steps that can be taken to provide a mutually satisfactory remedy.

If a satisfactory conclusion, acceptable to all parties, is not reached, the matter may be referred to the CEO in writing. This correspondence can be from the volunteer, the venue coordinator, or the Volunteering Coordinator. The decision of the CEO is final.

### **Recognition**

Each and every volunteer makes a contribution to the life of the WHC. To recognise this, WHC will undertake appropriate activities to thank volunteers

### **Volunteer Feedback**

WHC welcomes feedback on its services from volunteers. We undertake regular surveys of volunteers and provide opportunities for volunteers in the Support Centre and other projects to engage in constructive feedback.