

## **How the shelter works**

Each church has a collection of volunteers coordinated by an individual or group with appropriate experience and/or training. Each venue is staffed by teams of volunteers divided into three shifts, usually evening from 6pm to 10pm, overnight from 10pm to 6.30am and breakfast from 6.30am to 9am.

One of the two CARIS shelter supervisors always attends the evening shift to give the volunteer briefing, to register first-time guests and welcome returning ones, to check that all expected guests are either present or have been contacted, and to discuss any urgent pastoral or other issues with individual guests.

The volunteers arrive early to set up for the evening. At about 7pm the CARIS supervisor begins the confidential volunteer briefing about the guests who are registered for that evening. All of the guests will have been referred by an outside agency or organisation, such as Crisis, the British Red Cross, Islington Council or Pillion Trust. Doors open to the guests at 7.30pm. A hot dinner is served. Volunteers eat the evening meal together with guests and often play board games, watch football matches or simply chat with them. After a good night's sleep, guests are offered a full cooked breakfast, and they are expected to leave the shelter by 8.30am.

The volunteer coordinator (or team of coordinators) for each venue is key to the hospitality of the shelter: they have the responsibility for making sure that the volunteer rota is filled, that all the preparations have been completed on time and that everything runs smoothly. In doing so, the volunteer coordinator ensures that both guests and volunteers feel welcome, comfortable and confident in sharing time together. The contribution of every single volunteer in setting up the shelter, providing warm hospitality and listening and chatting to the guests is invaluable to the guests' wellbeing.

## **A sample timetable**

### **6.00-10.00pm: Evening shift**

- Open up.
- Prepare and cook a hot meal.
- Set up tables and chairs, prepare beds.
- Check showers/toilets for cleanliness, toiletries, towels.
- **7pm** Whole team briefing.
  - The CARIS Supervisor briefs volunteers on that night's guests, passing on any concerns from previous nights or other relevant developments.
  - The Volunteer Coordinator introduces new volunteers, ensures that every volunteer under 18 is buddied up with a more experienced team

member, checks that everyone has read the volunteers' handbook and also ensures that everyone knows the fire drill.

- **7.30pm** Doors open; book guests in for the night. Guests are expected to arrive before 8pm. *(NB The shelter can only accept guests aged over 18; if a prospective guest aged under 18 arrives, there is a legal duty to inform police and social services.)*
- Show new guests around.
- Serve tea and coffee over the course of the evening.
- Ensure everyone who wants to use showers or washing facilities has access.
- **C. 8pm** Serve and share meal with guests.
- Wash and tidy up after the meal.
- Organise social activities for the guests as required, e.g. board games, jigsaws, dominoes, TV, quiz night etc.
- Volunteer coordinator records any incidents and general impressions in the Logbook.

#### **10.00pm-6.30am: Night shift**

- Hand over to new shift members, including detailing the events of the previous shift.
- Secure the building.
- Make sure everyone is comfortable and settled in for the night.
- **11pm** Lights out and quiet for all guests.
- There should be one volunteer awake at all times, in case of need.
- In the morning the team leader records any incidents and general impressions in the Logbook.

#### **6.30-9.00am: Morning shift**

- Hand over to new shift members, including detailing the events of the previous shift.
- Wake guests.
- Make tea and coffee, set tables, cook and serve breakfast.
- Clear beds/mattresses and bedding away. Guests can be encouraged to clear up their own bedding, either to be put in named bags for next week's use or to be laundered, depending on the practice at the venue. (It is advised that you wear disposable gloves when handling used bedding.)
- Wash up; clean church premises and toilets.
- Take bedlinen and towels away for laundering at 60°.
- Shift leader: Ensure Logbook has been completed and comments sent to the CARIS Shelter Manager either by email or photograph of the Logbook and put Logbook in secure place.
- Secure the building.