

## The Snowflake Trust

### Report following the 2017 Volunteers' Feedback meeting

Held at Sussex Coast College, Hastings, Trustees welcomed 50 volunteers and noted 38 responses to the feedback form circulated beforehand (25 from new volunteers this winter, 13 from returning volunteers). In all, responses had thus been received from about one quarter of the 266 volunteers.

Andrew Crighton, Chair of Trustees, thanked all contributing volunteers, and began the meeting by

- congratulating Rebecca Black on her appointment to a post at The Seaview Project
- confirming that the Night Shelter had achieved the Housing Justice Quality Mark with an assessment of 'Excellent Practice'.

John Reid, Secretary & Treasurer, then reported the night shelter factual data, numbers of Guests etc, fundraising initiatives and other basic information, full details of which will be incorporated in the formal Annual Report to be published in June.

Feedback from the forms and those attending the meeting may be summarised as follows. Reference is also made, where appropriate, to comments made by Guests in their own feedback:

#### **Communications & Organisation**

- Generally, communications were found to have been timely and appropriate
- The wider awareness raising of the need for the shelter and opportunities for volunteering had been much more successful, due largely to the poster and leaflet delivering arrangements across the town which some volunteers had assisted with, and the maintenance of a Facebook page
- Whilst there had been some difficulty with emails sent from the website, generally the weekly email advising volunteers of their shifts had been welcomed
- The confirming contact with Coordinators before actual shifts was also well received, although it had not been possible for some Coordinators in some circumstances to have actually spoken with some volunteers, but had made contact by text message
- Post codes should be used in emails relating to venues for the avoidance of doubt about actual locations
- Most volunteers had used the website to see when their shifts had been allocated, although difficulties in keeping 'availability' data up to date had become a minor issue for the scheduler and some volunteers had asked to be able to alter this data themselves (not currently possible without full access to the website)
- There were differing views concerning the availability and use and opportunity for board games, discussions etc as on many occasions Guests did not wish such

engagement and frequently went to bed before 'lights out'; on the other hand, there had been many occasions when *Guests* wanted to 'talk' during the night

- Trustees noted that many volunteers had not been used as frequently as *Volunteers* wished. This meant that it had been difficult to create relationships with *Guests*, and *Guests* too had identified the variety of 'faces' they came into contact with as being sometimes unsettling. Trustees would consider how best to obviate this situation in future.

## Training

- Training from St John Ambulance on First Aid/Addiction had been very well received by 75 volunteers. It was recommended that in future, 'Addiction' might be a separate session, perhaps combined also with 'Mental Health' issue training
- Food Safety training via [www.Food-Safety.org.uk](http://www.Food-Safety.org.uk) had been successfully completed by many, but the award of certificates to many had not been advised to Trustees so it was difficult to judge how successful this had been
- Two sessions on dealing with 'Difficult Situations' had been held, one well attended and well received, the second not as well attended nor as successful
- Possibly training in 'Listening Skills' might be appropriate, especially for those undertaking night shifts, possibly piggy-backing on training available from other organisations

## Engagement with *Guests*

Generally, volunteers were unsure of what they had expected. However, in almost all responses, the following was clear:

- Volunteers felt the whole project was rewarding and enlightening, in some cases expressed as 'a privilege', certainly a better experience than had been anticipated
- *Guests* were found to be 'nice people' who just hadn't had the breaks or the support they needed - an immense groundswell of appreciation & thanks towards all volunteers was evident from the *Guests*
- Preconceptions about homeless people were shattered - 'It certainly made me see things differently'
- Volunteers generally worked well together under Rebecca Black's & Coordinators' leadership, and felt well supported

So far as the *Volunteers'* opinions as to whether their impact on *Guests* had been beneficial to the *Guests*, the general opinion was that they 'hoped so'. It was noted with pleasure that 16 *Guests* had been assisted to move into their own accommodation, including several of those *Guests* who had been welcomed into the Shelter for a number of years.

## Venues

- More accurate information, including post codes, should be given concerning actual location of the various halls. Perhaps a Google map might be possible on the website

- Noted that the Trustees would be conducting a review with the owners/operators of the various halls used this winter concerning the opinions received.
- Some shelters had issues concerning the levels of heat or cold, availability of reasonably sized kitchens (which dictated to a degree what nature of food would be possible to provide), availability of mobile phone charging facilities, access and so forth
- Preparation of different types of meals/food were considered, although it was noted that other organisations did provide food during each day and evening, and that at weekends (when the Seaview Project was closed), homeless Guests were able to obtain free/reasonably priced main meals at lunchtimes. Such information should be made available by way of a handout
- St Matthews Parish Centre appeared to be the most appropriate location, although some Guests found the distance and need to climb hills was something of a deterrent
- Generally, whilst recognising the particular challenges of each venue, there was tacit agreement that consistency across the venues was an issue which remained to be resolved.

### **General**

- A Job Description relating to each shift should be considered so that volunteers had more information about exactly what it was that was expected of them
- Unscheduled/unregistered volunteers attending venues to be eliminated
- Feedback forms to be handed out to volunteers before the end of the shelter

May 2017