

The Snowflake Trust

Report following the Winter 2017/2018 Night Shelter Volunteers' Feedback meeting

Held at Sussex Coast College, Hastings, Trustees welcomed 30 volunteers and noted 59 responses to the feedback form circulated beforehand (30 from new volunteers this winter, 29 from returning volunteers). In all, responses had thus been received from about one third of the 198 active volunteers. Andrew Crighton, Chair of Trustees, thanked all contributing volunteers, and began the meeting by indicating that a part of a BBC documentary filmed in Hastings and featuring a Snowflake Guest would be aired after the formal meeting for those wishing to stay on and see it.

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

- 63 Guests had visited the shelter (this might have been more but for a further 7 for whom the night shelter had been deemed inappropriate for a variety of good and valid reasons, and 13 where sponsoring agencies had forwarded details, but the client did not attend the registration interview)
- 24 Guests had been assisted to 'move on' into their own accommodation

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:

1. The Registration Meeting - whilst 84% of respondees felt that this was a useful event, a number felt that the meeting would have been more useful as a more formal induction event, and this is an issue the Trustees would consider for the future
2. 85% of volunteers felt that they had received adequate information concerning their role. Whilst a good response, nevertheless there were 15% who were dissatisfied, and consideration would be given to incorporating more practical advice and instruction early in the volunteer recruitment process in future.
3. 86% of volunteers felt that had received appropriate information concerning their shift allocations, and 93% indicated they had reviewed the Diary page on the website from time to time to see if they could fill any vacancies. Many comments were received both from the forms and at the meeting as to how the whole process could be improved, and it was confirmed that a very thorough review would be undertaken by the Trustees. It was noted that some volunteers felt that if they had made themselves available, then they should be allocated to those occasions. Clearly, in order to give all volunteers a chance to serve, this is not possible, and it was intended that the process of review would resolve this issue going forward. There were still volunteers without access to email or the website, and arrangements would be needed to ensure they were not

forgotten in any process or communication. Suggested that more notice be given of shift allocations generally. The issue of exactly what training was required was a difficult one, as the needs of Guests could not be noted until they were actually admitted to the shelter.

4. Training - 86% felt they had all the training they needed in order to fulfil their duties. Various recommendations for the future were made, including full training before the shelter opened, more specific training in respect of each of the three shifts, whether or not training was to be completed before a volunteer was allocated to a shift, and the inclusion at an early stage of training in dealing with practical, difficult situations (examples were given). A suggestion was made for basic training packages to be made available on discrete parts of the website, and this idea would be followed up with the webmaster. Whether or not training would be compulsory was considered.
5. 91% of respondees felt able to deal with situations they faced.
6. 90% agreed that they felt part of a team supporting the Guests. That said, there were some disturbing comments about volunteers of differing attitude and effectiveness, and of some being made to feel unwelcome or poorly briefed. These points will receive full consideration by the Trustees.
7. 91% felt that the night shelter staff supported them, and that the shelter was managed well. Trustees recognise that not all staff were appropriately qualified or trained for the tasks asked of them, and this whole issue would be reconsidered by the Trustees in the light of comments received.
8. Only 82% of volunteers felt supported by the Trustees. This is disappointing, and Trustees will take this implied criticism on board and seek ways to redress the issue in future.
9. It is pleasing that 94% of responding volunteers felt that their experience was a positive one.
10. Generally, comments received which included negative elements were accompanied either by recommendations for change or received an acknowledgement that there was little to be done given the nature of the Trust and its operations.
11. Venues received considerable comment, and it was recognised that the Trust had little influence over the nature and quality of the facilities provided. The issue about washroom facilities at St Mary Star of the Sea were being resolved, and comments about the standards of kitchens and how they were equipped (and therefore the menu available) were duly noted. Various comments concerning Guest activities and what could be provided were received.
12. A number of volunteers wished to be involved over the Summer, and Trustees would be looking at that issue in due course.
13. Communication continued to be a concern, especially when using a variety of technology. This should not be a problem now.

Much to consider and many thanks were proffered to all concerned.