



**GWNS Food Project  
Volunteer Handbook  
2020 - 2021**

## **1. Introduction**

Thank you for volunteering to be part of Greenwich Winter Night Shelter (GWNS)'s Food Project, without you we would not be able to launch this project.

Normally, we provide a safe and welcome refuge to homeless people over some of the coldest months of the year. However, as a result of the pandemic, we are sadly not able to offer accommodation to our guests this year. We are therefore launching the GWNS Food Project where we will be providing hot meals to the hungry and homeless at Christ Church, East Greenwich.

We hope that your experience of being a GWNS volunteer will be rewarding. The following document sets out more information about the project, guidelines for volunteers and operational procedures. Please take some time to read this carefully and raise any questions you may have with the Project Manager or one of the Trustees (contact details are set out at the end of this booklet).

## **2. Food project description**

The GWNS Food Project will provide hot meals for those in need over the winter months. our main priority is meeting the needs of those who are homeless or have been financially affected by the pandemic. As this is new and in exceptionally challenging times, it means the project may change and evolve as we tailor our support to have maximum impact.

One of our key values at GWNS is hospitality. We are grateful to volunteers of any or no faith, provided that every volunteer agrees to the core values of compassion, empathy and kindness to our fellow human beings.

We recognise that the external environment is extremely volatile and expect government guidance to change a number of times over

the winter. Your safety is our biggest priority and you will never be expected to commit to a role you do not feel comfortable with.

### 3. Structure

GWNS is an inter-church charity operates in accordance with the Housing Justice Quality Mark. The responsibility and day to day work of GWNS is undertaken by:

- **The Trustees:** a small team with overall responsibility for the running of the shelter
- **The Project Management Team:** responsible for project co-ordination and administration including liaison with agencies such as Royal Borough Greenwich (RBG). The Project Management Team reports to the Trustees.
- **Evening Coordinators:** responsible for the overall operational effectiveness of shifts, compiling the rota to provide the full complement of volunteers to each shift, ensuring provisions are available to prepare the necessary meals and the cleaning up of the venue. Evening coordinators are supported by Shift Leaders.
- **Shift Leaders:** responsible for allocating tasks to volunteers, taking key decisions when other volunteers are unsure of the best course of action and supporting volunteers where necessary in responding to guests. The shift leaders feed back to the Evening Coordinators.

### 4. Logistics

The food project will take place at **Christ Church East Greenwich, Trafalgar Road, Greenwich, SE10 9EQ.**

Initially, we will be operating on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays although this may change depending on demand/need.

Cooks and kitchen support will be able to arrive earlier at the venue to prepare. All other volunteers should arrive at 5.30pm for a brief from the Evening Coordinator and to help set up, ready to start serving food to guests from 6.30-8.30pm. We hope to be finished for the evening by 9pm once everything is cleared away.

If you have any questions about your shift or you are no longer able to make it, you should let your Evening Coordinator know as soon as possible (contact details at the end of this document).

## **5. Volunteer roles**

There are a number of different ways you can get involved in the operation of the food project. Below are the different volunteer roles:

- **Cook:** cooking the meals for the guests. While you can prepare food at home, all cooking must be done on site in the kitchen at Christ Church. Your Evening Coordinator will let you know how many to cook for in advance.
- **Greeter:** welcoming guests to the venue and explaining how it operates. You will have significant interaction with guests.
- **Marshall:** standing on the door and allowing people into the venue/queue. You will need to have quite a bit of experience at GWNS as this role is potentially challenging, particularly if you have to turn people away as they are not in a fit state to enter the building.
- **Server:** serving the food into take-away boxes and handing

them to the guests. You will have significant interaction with guests.

- **Kitchen support:** helping the cooks to prepare food and wash up/clear down at the end of the shift. You will have little interaction with guests.
- **Non front-line role:** particularly for those who are vulnerable or not comfortable working on the front line, you will support with admin tasks of delivering/collecting food and supplies.

## 6. Guidelines for volunteers

The purpose of GWNS is to provide support and hospitality to those in our local area who are in need. It is not a support agency; advice, on-going support or advocacy cannot be offered by volunteers to any guest, however much they might want to. However, we will provide volunteers with information about support agencies so they can signpost guests to professional advice.

All volunteers will need to fill in an application form via our website. Any new volunteers will need to undergo training and provide the name and contact details of two referees who can vouch for their suitability to work with vulnerable adults. In the case of church-goers, one referee should be their Vicar or church leader. For others, a professional or workplace reference is preferred. The second referee should be a personal or character referee who is not a close personal friend or family member.

At the discretion of the Evening Coordinator, young people aged between 16-18 may be allowed to help, subject to a full risk assessment being carried out.

## 7. What is required of volunteers?

### **Volunteers should exhibit the following:**

- Compassion and a willingness to be challenged.
- Commitment to undertake all prescribed volunteer training
- Desire to treat guests with respect and make them feel welcome.
- Reliable and good time keeping.
- Ability to maintain boundaries (first name terms only).
- Dress appropriate to the circumstances.
- Ability to follow the Evening Coordinator's or Shift Leader's instructions, and work as part of a team (volunteers should not challenge the decision of the venue coordinator in front of other volunteers or guests).
- Good sense of judgement e.g. knowing when to call for help or further advice, responding calmly but quickly in an emergency.
- Knowledge of GWNS guidelines.
- Sensitivity to issues relating to homelessness including mental health issues and addiction.
- Knowledge of the building layout, especially the location of fire exits and a first aid box (information provided by Evening Leaders).

### **Volunteers should not:**

- Bring alcohol or drugs into a venue or arrive to volunteers

under the influence of alcohol.

- Make promises to guests. GWNS needs to build/maintain trust in order to be effective in finding appropriate help for guests; broken promises can undermine this work.
- Allow themselves to be alone with a guest.
- Arrange to meet with guests outside the shelter unless it is an activity arranged with GWNS.
- Wear or bring valuables to the shelter.
- Lend money or phones to guests.
- Provide personal information to guests (especially address, telephone number or e-mail)
- Give medication to guests, not even paracetamol

## **8. Health, Safety and Safeguarding**

We are very conscious that we'll be running this project in a challenging circumstances and the safety and well being of all is our biggest priority. All volunteers and guests will have to wear masks and sanitise their hands on arrival. We will provide masks and sanitiser to guests. We will make sure that people can volunteer at a safe distance from one another and will fully comply with government guidelines, reviewing how we operate on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, if you fall under a vulnerable category as per [NHS guidance](#), you will not be able to volunteer at the venue. However, there will be other ways you can get involved so do still fill in the application form if you'd like to (you will be able to specify this in the form).

As has been the case in previous years, all cooks will need to have an up-to-date Food Hygiene Level 2 certificate. You can complete the course online by following this [link](#) it costs £10 which can be expensed. Volunteers will not be able to cook unless they have an up-to-date qualification.

## **9. Respect and Confidentiality**

It is important not to push for personal information from guests. Please acknowledge that some people may feel hurt or let down by their experience and may not wish to talk about it. Others will be more open and able to tell you their story. Respect confidentiality and do not allow your conversation with a guest to become common gossip especially with other guests or volunteers.

Confidentiality is important for building trust, but it is not about keeping secrets and this should be made clear to guests. If at any time you feel that the individual you are speaking to poses a threat to themselves or another person, or to the safety of the shelter, you should advise the individual that you will need to let your Evening Coordinator/shift leader know immediately. Likewise, if you feel that a conversation is too demanding, tell the guest that you may have to tell your Evening Coordinator what is being said in order to get appropriate help. The decision whether to proceed with the conversation then rests with the guest.

## **10. Decision Making**

There is a lead person on every shift who is responsible for making key decisions. Please do not question any decision in front of other volunteers or guests. If you feel there is an issue with a decision taken, please talk to the Evening Coordinator/Shift Leader in private. If you still feel that your views are not being considered fairly then you may make a complaint to either the Project Manager or one of the Trustees, who will advise you on next steps. Contact details for these people are listed at the end of this document.



## **10. Procedure for the prevention of violence**

Although these guidelines focus on the extreme end of violent behaviour, this does not mean to imply that only physical assault is of concern. Threats and verbal abuse, for example, are also recognised as intimidating and can undermine the operational effectiveness of the shelter. Where appropriate, these guidelines should apply to all forms of aggressive behaviour.

### **General guidelines for managing violence and aggression**

It is natural to be frightened of violence and this needs to be taken into account in the expectations of oneself or others when dealing with actual or potential violence or threatening behaviour. In responding to violence or potential violence, one's own safety and that of colleagues and guests must be the first consideration. Guidelines can never cover every eventuality. Volunteers must also draw on their experience, skills and common sense when faced with aggressive situations.

### **Managing a violent incident**

It is the responsibility of all volunteers to alert the Evening Coordinator/Shift Leader at the first sign of aggression and to act cooperatively to diffuse the situation. The Evening Coordinator/shift leader with one other volunteer should talk to the individual(s) concerned, remaining calm but firm, and trying to create opportunities for the guest(s) to back down without feeling humiliated. Where possible, the guest(s) should be taken aside. Other volunteers should remain at a reasonable distance but pay attention in case the situation escalates.

Volunteers who are not directly involved should attempt to keep other guests calm and prevent them from becoming involved, unless they are friends who can assist positively. In particular, one

volunteer should ensure that any 16 to 18 year olds are removed from the area and, if possible, potential weapons such as plates, cutlery should be removed. Space should be created to ensure that people are not crowded into a confined area. All those present should be mindful of their own and others “escape routes” should it be necessary to get out of the way fast.

One worker should be in a position to telephone the police for assistance should this become necessary. It may be useful to identify in advance which volunteer on your shift would have this responsibility should a situation arise. If an incident escalates and the guest(s) cannot be calmed, then volunteers should be prepared to vacate the area. Personal safety must be put before the protection of property. The police should be summoned immediately.

### **After an incident has occurred**

If an incident does occur, it is likely to be very unsettling for everyone involved in the project whether volunteer or guest. Some useful actions to assist the shelter include:

- Promote first aid where necessary
- Provide reassurance and help everyone to calm down.
- The Evening Coordinator/shift leader should write up the incident as soon as possible. If another person has witnessed the incident, they should also write their version of events.
- Collect necessary details/information and arrange for any volunteer who has been scared or hurt to leave the shift.
- Arrange longer term support where necessary.
- Discuss the incident and try and draw out constructive lessons to avoid a similar incident in the future.

- Consider providing other guests with brief details of what happened and how it was dealt with in order to prevent rumours and provide reassurance that incidents are dealt with effectively.

## **11. GWNS Complaints & Grievance Procedure**

This procedure is intended for any person involved in the GWNS whether they are a guest, or a volunteer. The procedure set out below should be adopted in the event of a grievance or formal complaint arising during the course of the normal operation of the night shelter, which does not fall into the categories of infringement of the shelter rules by a guest, or other policies on harassment, but may relate to how these disciplines are implemented or exercised, or a grievance reported.

The complaint form must be completed and logged by the Venue Coordinator/Shift Leader, and passed on to the GWNS Trustee responsible for complaints, Margaret Cave (Chair of Trustees) and recorded in the Log Book. If it is inappropriate to write the complaint in the Log Book the complainant should make their complaint in writing and pass this directly to the Chair of Trustees or via the GWNS Project Manager as appropriate.

If a guest makes a complaint about GWNS to their referrer, and this is passed on to the Project Manager, it is the Project Manager's responsibility to inform the Chair of Trustees to progress. The Chair will seek to resolve the matter informally with those concerned as soon as possible. Where this is not possible, the complaint must be fully investigated with those concerned within two weeks. The complainant should then be notified of the outcome in writing. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they may take their grievance to the GWNS Trustees. The decision of the Trustees shall be final.

## **12. Disclosure of a safeguarding issue**

GNWS recognises that a safeguarding issue may arise during the course of the shelter operation. If a guest discloses information which causes concern for their safety or the safety of others or relates to a criminal offence, this should be documented and the Safeguarding Lead should be immediately informed. The Safeguarding Lead will take appropriate action and also inform the Trustees as appropriate and necessary.

Where there is an immediate danger during the operation of the shelter, emergency services should be contacted by dialling 999.

## **13. Gifts**

Guests should not be encouraged to give gifts. Financial gifts should not be accepted. However, from time to time guests may wish to show their gratitude by giving a gift to the volunteers. In such cases, where possible, they should be directed towards a gift that can be shared with the team e.g. box of chocolates. All gifts should be reported to the Evening Coordinator/Shift Leader and recorded in the Logbook. Any gift deemed to be too expensive or in some way inappropriate should be gently returned to the guest.

## **14. Contact Information**

### **Trustees:**

Revd Margaret Cave (Chair): [vicar@christchurchgreenwich.org.uk](mailto:vicar@christchurchgreenwich.org.uk)

Tom Greenwood (Secretary): [thomgreenwood@gmail.com](mailto:thomgreenwood@gmail.com)

Adeola Boateng (Treasurer): [gwnstreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:gwnstreasurer@gmail.com)

Marianne Gass (Safeguarding Lead): [gwnsmarianne@gmail.com](mailto:gwnsmarianne@gmail.com)

Beverley Campbell: [beverley.bcbcnightshelter@gmail.com](mailto:beverley.bcbcnightshelter@gmail.com)

Hugh Ridsdill-Smith: [hugh.ridsdill-smith@live.co.uk](mailto:hugh.ridsdill-smith@live.co.uk)

Lakshan Saldin [lakshangwns@gmail.com](mailto:lakshangwns@gmail.com)

Steven Parker [stevenkparker@gmail.com](mailto:stevenkparker@gmail.com)

### **Evening Coordinators:**

If you have any operational queries, please contact the relevant evening coordinator.

#### **Monday evenings:**

Marianne Gass, [gwnsmarianne@gmail.com](mailto:gwnsmarianne@gmail.com) (07722 318 852)

#### **Wednesday evenings:**

Katy Ridsdill-Smith, [kt\\_rs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kt_rs@hotmail.co.uk) (07376 004 440)

#### **Friday evenings:**

Beverley Campbell [beverley.bcbcnightshelter@gmail.com](mailto:beverley.bcbcnightshelter@gmail.com) (07773 177 039)

Judith Eastaugh, [juditheastaugh@gmail.com](mailto:juditheastaugh@gmail.com) (07906 043 317)