

Winter Shelter Training and Information Session 6 December 2014

Introduction – Fr Tim Pike, Chair of All People All Places (APAP)

Work of All People All Places includes referrals to the night shelter and advocacy (benefits, documentation, helping with interviews, securing accommodation)

APAP wanted two night shelter projects – one in Haringey, the other in Enfield, seven days a week in each borough, but can't do it this year. So there will be one night shelter across two boroughs. It will be a transitional year, and next year more will be done. *(Note: for Clay Hill Night Shelter this means that instead of running the shelter for 10 weeks from 2 January, it will now operate for six weeks)*

Tim reflected on his experience of running a shelter for the last five years at his church, Holy Innocence in Hornsey – it's the best thing they've done in the ten years Tim has been there. Guests have low needs, so can be dealt with by volunteers. It is difficult to tell the difference between guests and volunteers. Their problem is making sure everyone who want to volunteer get to have a go.

Mark Brennan – Islington Churches Winter Night Shelter and Housing Justice

Mark set the scene about what homelessness means in London, giving a stark analysis of the scale of the issue.

Iceberg analogy

- above the waterline – conspicuous homeless (rough sleepers): 2,500 to 6,500 any given night in London
- below the waterline – hidden homeless (anybody needing to be housed, threat of eviction, domestic violence, people in squats, in precarious situations, etc) 400,000 best estimate in London

There are:

- 57,350 households in temporary accommodation;
- 1,690,000 households on waiting lists;
- 1,100,000 households are overcrowded
- 750,000 to 1,200,000 migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and travellers (and local authorities have taken hard line saying they can't help them, although more is now being done)

What sort of people – new to street, living on street, returners?

- 47% from UK, 28% EEC, rest is 50/50 from rest of Europe and Asia/Africa
- 88% male 12% female
- 11% under 25, 58% 26-45, 22% 45-55, 9% over 55
- 70% white
- There are some who choose to stay on the street – no responsibilities for bills, etc, who need specific approach (personalisation), but they are a small proportion.

- There are those new to street, and there are initiatives seeking to stem the flow. “No second night out” has 4 hubs across London – only for new homeless. In each hub there is intense work by keyworkers to get them off the street, but often takes more than 24 hours to get sorted, and hubs are always busy and clogged up. In the meantime, they can utilise the shelter network.
- Returners – for some, it can be a revolving door and issues can be more complex.

The industry (top-down approach) – currently £700m p.a.

- **London Housing Foundation** publishes a series of documents and reports to help inform and challenge the sector. The Atlas provides a unique annual snapshot of London's services for homeless people.
<http://www.lhf.org.uk/publications>
- **StreetLink** is an England-wide phone-line, website and mobile app which enables the public to alert Local Authorities about people sleeping rough in their area <http://www.streetlink.org.uk/>
- **No Second Night Out (NSNO)** focuses on helping those who find themselves rough sleeping on the streets of London for the first time. NSNO will ensure there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers, and will provide an offer that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night.
<http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk/>
- **Homeless London** is a source of information about advice, support, hostels and accommodation services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in London.

Most have contact with some of the services.

Church and Community Night Shelter Network (ground-up approach)

- 28 boroughs involved in London this year
- Loose coordination of projects – all governed differently
- Often inter-faith
- Grassroots, ground-up, community response – “magic of hospitality”
- When ground-up and top-down meet = best outcomes, not just for beneficiaries, but also stronger local communities
- Headlines:
 - 1303 guests in London
 - 491 (34%) found move-on accommodation
 - 934 (60%) had casework support
 - 112,300 volunteer hours £1.5m value across 24 Night Shelters
 - 21 shelters in 23 boroughs – total 42,161 bed spaces
 - 450 churches, church halls, synagogues and mosques offered their premises

Building trust is important – willingly engage with services, rather than be told. Hospitality will give guests opportunity to think – primary reason is relationship breakdown. There can be spiralling descent of issues – think about the context of the guests’ circumstances.

Question to the floor – what are the risks you may have concerns about?

- Won't relate to guests
- Aggression
- Smell
- What to talk to people about
- How far do you ask questions

It's about inviting guests who have been referred. Some will say thanks but no thanks – if they don't turn up, others will be offered. It's people who choose to stay. People dependent on drink or drugs wouldn't be referred.

People can be overwhelmed by hospitality – because they have been marginalised, abused, etc. etc.

Respect the guests' confidentiality – always ask whether information can be shared. However, if there are safeguarding issues where there could be harm for themselves or others, we have a duty to report.

Volunteer Handbook includes policy and procedures that have developed over 25 years. Keeping safe best practice:

- No lone working – it's a group activity
- Be social butterflies – don't spend too much time with one guest
- No personal contact details
- Ensure own safety at all times
- Don't bring valuables
- Use shelter documents – Volunteer's Handbook

Why we are doing this?

- Meeting growing need
- Open to all faiths and none
- Valuing the person
- Seeing whole person – not just the problem
- Sharing life stories – can be therapeutic
- Healing spaces

Housing Justice <http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/>

Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action in the field of housing and homelessness. We exist because we believe that human dignity is challenged by the lack of decent housing.

We support night shelters, drop-ins and hundreds of practical projects nationwide by providing advice and training for churches and other community groups who work with homeless people.

We provide a range of supportive forums which we facilitate to ensure people feel free to express their views in a positive environment and their opinions are heard.

We work to unite Christians and churches of all denominations across the country to work for change. We embrace partnerships with people of all faiths (and none) who share our values of social justice and compassion.

Ally Lavy – Joint Coordinator for St James Shelter, Muswell Hill

Ally works for the Red Cross Refugee Service. Many refugees are homeless and may need shelter. Volunteers do not need to get involved in casework of guests.

Ally shared her experiences as Coordinator at St James:

- Guests want to trust the shelter – many have lost trust in many areas of their life. So need consistency, be fair to all.
- Confidentiality – don't gossip amongst volunteers or with guests – guests are usually vulnerable
- Hospitality – most are exhausted and tired, many will go to bed after eating.
- Guests are like us – often can't tell volunteers and guests apart
- Think outside the box – you'll meet some amazing and warm people
- Be organised – so things can be found
- Briefing before each night – so everyone knows what to do
- Have checklist of tasks

Open discussion from the floor about practical issues:

- Different roles – practical things can break the ice
- Coordinator on door as guests arrive
- Is there confusion about which church guests should go to? There's one overall shelter 7 days a week, hosted by a different church each night, and guests are given clear instructions how to get to each church
- Items such as toothpaste and toothbrushes – started by giving toiletry bag each but changed (guests don't need new things each night) so have boxes of items so guests can top up as and when (needs to be monitored)
- Get wider community engagement – food, laundry, etc.
- Non-guests gatecrashing? There's no sign outside saying there is a shelter. If someone wants to come in who is not on the list of guests, explain gently that it is not a drop-in

Tony Moseley – All People All Places

Volunteers are the key to shelters – no volunteers, no shelters!

APAP deal with wide range of issues together – registering with GPs, benefits, etc

Type of guests:

- Referrals from agencies are monitored and make sure support needs aren't too high
- Wide range of people (like you and me) – some work, but may not have enough money for deposit
- Many may have some sort of abuse or alcohol problem (35%) – all shelters are dry for guests and volunteers

Volunteer handbook – for all volunteers

Behaviour in shelter – bad/violent behaviour is rare – liaise with APAP or call emergency services

Each guest signs an agreement – so they know what is expected of them

2014/15 project

- Starts 30 December – referrals from Crisis
- Guests offered 28 days shelter accommodation initially but some may need more
- Coordinator in each church
- Must disclose information that may have safety implications

Shelter operation

- 7.00pm get things ready
- 7.30 guests invited in
- 8.00 serve meal
- 10.00 start of night shift
- 6.30am breakfast
- 8.00 guests leave

Issues from the floor:

- Insurance – APAP has public liability, but each location must have its own insurance to cover the shelter and liability for volunteers
- Funding – from different sources. For APAP, from grants and fundraising. For churches, from donations (money and things)
- Number of people to volunteer? Depends on shelter
- Cooking – Level 2 Food Hygiene and Safety certificate – can be done on-line takes about 45 minutes. APAP encourages volunteers who are cooking to do the course and APAP can reimburse cost
- Washing facilities – some have showers
- Can set aside an area for lighting candles