

## Record of the final meeting of the Rugby Winter Shelter Project 2016-17 held on Wednesday April 5th in the Hope Centre

After **Opening Devotions** based on Mark 12: 28-34, the **Record of the March 2017 meeting** was agreed and signed. There were no **Matters Arising**.

**Support Workers' Observations incl. RWS statistics over the four months.** Paul le Keux reflected on the RWS on behalf of the Hope Centre team. This had been his first RWS and he was pleased to see how it all functioned. The project had ended well with a generally quiet March after the difficulties of February. The significant numbers of exclusions had helped to make the RWS both more manageable and safe. He was still working on the final project statistics but hopes to get these to us in the next few days. (\*) The signs are that the numbers of bed nights were lower than last year. Among the reasons for this may have been some guests staying away because of the drunkenness and aggression problems they became aware of; and a higher number of exclusions. Already some of the guests are missing the camaraderie of the RWS. Two more have found accommodation recently. Actual call outs had been rare over the course of the project, but there had been many telephone calls – mainly about exclusions or admissions.

(\*) **RWS 2016-7 Statistics** (last year's figures in brackets): This winter 55 (51) guests, 3 (8) of whom were female, slept overnight at one of the venues for some 1322 (1,526) bed nights. The oldest guest using the shelter this year was 66 (64) and the youngest was 22 (18), while the average age of the guests was 44 (37).

**Reports from the host venues and updates.** Each venue Team Leader reported in turn. Two were not able to be present in person but had sent written reports. In the process we noted that this project had been unusual for the number of no shows and for increased levels of drunkenness and aggression by some. These incidents coloured people's perceptions of course but generally speaking most guests had been well-behaved and appreciative. The circulating of the daily log files to each other was generally agreed to have been a helpful development, and one which helped us to be both forewarned and forearmed! Quicker application and consistent use of exclusions, and a determination not to allow problems to develop outside venues by offering food there, had also been lessons well learned. One TL appealed for greater consistency in never allowing anyone who is inebriated into a venue because of the problems this can cause for others later in the week. A recurring pressure for some venues was the very small number of volunteers willing to do overnight sessions. Some volunteer fatigue towards the end of the project was also noted. We then spent time considering particular guests, housing progress, and the decision of some TLs not to admit a guest for reasons that had been explained at the time via the log files.

**Reflections incl. on No Shows and Exclusions** We reflected further on this for a time including discussing a suggestion that a no show should lead to an automatic two night ban. It was felt that this would complicate what could already be difficult decisions for the Support Workers. Paul explained how important it is to find out more about why a guest had not shown up first – sometimes there were good reasons. The purchase of a contact phone for guests to use to notify of a no show will be considered for the future. We also spoke about the particular pressures the Directors feel in getting decisions on exclusions right – especially when trying to understand the complex world of addiction or to balance discipline with compassion.

**Revised List of Volunteers used at the 7 Venues over the four months.** These were all submitted for the charity's files. Well over 200 volunteers had, again, been part of the RWS this year. Michael then

asked us to pass on Hope 4's thanks to all of our volunteers without whom the project could not happen.

**Decision in principle about the 2017- 8 Rugby Winter Shelter Project .** Each of us , in turn, confirmed a willingness in principle to be part of a RWS in 2017-8. A final decision here, however, will be taken in September and – as always – is subject to enough volunteers coming forward to help us locally.

**Homelessness Task Group.** Michael referred to the Homelessness Task Group the Council is setting up. Its convenor Cllr. Jerry Roodhouse will be meeting with the Directors soon. The Council spend significant money each month on b&b accommodation. Might this be better spent in developing a professionally run emergency home of some kind? is a live issue at this time. All of us agreed, from our experiences over these six years, that the need for professional, all-year round emergency accommodation of some kind in the Borough of Rugby remains. As local churches we do what we can to provide "temporary emergency accommodation" during the coldest months of the year; but something more permanent remains vitally needed. Even more so then when we began six years ago. The problems caused by radical benefit changes and the numbers of homeless young single men are growing across the Borough.

The meeting was then closed with prayer.

**RWS 2017-8 initial team meeting:** 27/9 @14.30 in the Hope Centre