



St Mary's Parish Office
The Welcome Centre
8 Church End
Walthamstow
E17 9RJ
Email: info@forestnightshelter.org.uk
Web: www.forestnightshelter.org.uk

Handbook For Volunteers

(Updated September 2017)

Please donate

Even with kind food donations and free church halls, we still have plenty of running costs, so all donations are welcome. You can donate directly and safely through our MyDonate page which allows us to reclaim the Gift Aid as well.

Please go to www.mydonate.bt.com and search for **Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelters to donate.**

If you prefer you can send a cheque our registered office at the address on page 2.

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Contact Information

Registered Address: St Mary's Welcome Centre

8 Church End

Walthamstow

E17 9RJ

Telephone: 07739 870 411 (Shelter Caseworker)

Email: info@forestnightshelter.org.uk

Website www.forestnightshelter.org.uk

WELCOME

First, we would like to say a huge thank you for your interest in volunteering with FCENS. The shelter is run by volunteers and simply could not operate without them. We believe that volunteering at the night shelter is an incredibly valuable and rewarding experience, and we hope that you find that too. This handbook sets out the key information you should need as a volunteer, but if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Our Mission

The project aims to relieve poverty among homeless people in Waltham Forest by providing accommodation, advice and assistance.

History

The Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelters first opened in January 2009 when a small group of churches decided to meet the need for night shelter provision in the borough and open their doors for rough sleepers every night through the coldest winter months. We catered for 130 rough sleepers that first winter. Every year since, the shelters have grown and more and more homeless people are welcomed into a safe and warm environment. In 2011 FCENS registered both as a company limited by guarantee and as a charity.

Services

We provide:

- Waltham Forest's only winter night shelter
- Information on services for homeless people in the borough
- A casework service (dependant on funds raised each year)

Winter Night Shelters

The basics

The shelters usually run from 1st November until 31st March every year and provide emergency accommodation for up to 30 people every night. Our focus is very much on the quality of service to our guests. We aim to offer a welcoming, inclusive and non-judgmental environment, provided by a large number of committed volunteers. Guests and volunteers sit and eat together which helps make our guests feel "at home" and has proved successful in engaging those who have previously been unable or unwilling to work with mainstream support services.

Everybody who stays at the shelters is given a sleeping mat and a sleeping bag. The men and the women sleep in different areas. We offer everyone a cooked main evening meal as well as breakfast in the mornings. Even if some-one can't get into the shelter that night, they will always have hot drinks and a meal served outside and some friendly words.

Casework Service

Each year, we aim to employ a Shelter Caseworker to offer advice, advocacy and practical support to our guests. For example, the Shelter Caseworker will help guests to make contact with drug and alcohol support projects, mental health services, register with a GP, obtain identification and set up benefit claims. Help to find work is also provided and guests are also referred to hostels and housing services when possible. They also take bookings for places at the shelter and organise the registration of guests.

Daytime Services

We aim to work closely with the Day Centre in the borough which offers daytime services to homeless people all year round. Here there are free shower facilities and a clothing store where donated items of clothes are collected and passed on to those in need.

Information Cards

We also produce an information card giving details of day centres, advice agencies, healthcare centres, refugee agencies and useful help lines. This is available to homeless people and interested members of the public.

Mental health

In 2017/2018 we are hoping to work with Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL) to provide more support on mental health issues, including training for volunteers. We hope that this will be on-going but this will depend on funding and future arrangements.

WHO WE ARE

Structure

FCENS is a registered charity (registered charity number 1148362). We currently operate in the Waltham Forest area.

Each year changes dependent on the level of funding that we can secure but set out below is a summary of our structure.

Management Team

FCENS is run by the trustees made up of 7 individuals all of whom are volunteers. The trustees have overall responsibility for setting the strategy and direction of the organisation and ensuring compliance with the relevant laws and rules. Our chair is currently Revd. David Britton, vicar of St. John the Baptist, Leytonstone.

Shelter Caseworker

The Shelter Caseworker is employed each season to manage the day to day operation of the shelters. They work closely and in collaboration with the venue coordinators to ensure that the evening runs smoothly.

Venue Coordinators and Night Shelter Volunteers

Venue Coordinators act as the senior volunteer for each venue and work with the Shelter Caseworker. They are responsible for recruiting volunteers for the night shelters as well as managing the volunteer team on the night. This includes preparing the venue for the evening, overseeing preparation of food and drink and delegating tasks once the shelter is open.

Each venue has its own team of volunteers who prepare food, set up the eating area, assist on the door, serve food, chat with guests, wash dishes and tidy up before the guests' bed time. Volunteers also come in to help with breakfast preparation and service and some volunteers stay awake overnight to assist the Night Awake Worker (see below). See pages 5-7 for more detail on your role as a volunteer.

Night Awake Workers

The trustees employ two part-time night awake staff to cover the week. They take a handover from the Shelter Caseworker and Venue Coordinator and ensure safety and security through the night. The Night Awake Worker on duty is supported by volunteers who stay awake to help in the case of an emergency. They report any important occurrences to the Shelter Caseworker by text or email so they can be passed on to the next night's shelter team.

Decision Making

The lead person on any shift is the Venue Coordinator. Please do not question their decisions in front of other volunteers or guests. **If you feel something is unfair then please talk to the Coordinator in private. If you still feel that your views are not being considered fairly, then please ask to make a complaint to the Shelter Caseworker who will advise you on how to follow the correct procedure (see page 2 for contact details). If you are concerned that someone should be refused entry to the shelter, please see page 12 for information on our exclusion policy.**

WHO ARE OUR GUESTS?

They are people from all walks of life and from all parts of the world who are homeless in Waltham Forest for a variety of reasons.

Some of the common causes are:

- Mental health problems – including depression
- Drugs, alcohol and related problems
- Family breakdown – death, divorce, conflict with family members
- Change of circumstances – e.g. was living with a parent/relative who has died
- A history of being in care
- Former members of the Armed Services
- Unemployed /Debt
- Jail/crime – history of offending
- Gambling addiction
- Lack of papers – birth certificates/passports
- An inability to access services such as benefits and doctors

WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Volunteers are an essential part of the team contributing to the overall success of FCENS. It can be a heart-warming and rewarding experience, sharing your time and effort with an interesting and varied group of people, both guests and fellow volunteers. If, at any time, you are not sure of your role, or you are worried about anything, please do not hesitate to contact the Venue Coordinator or Shelter Caseworker (see page 2 for contact details) who will try to remedy any problem as soon as possible.

The following section contains basic information on how the shelters are run and what you can expect from an average night at the night shelters. All shelters operate in a similar way.

Cooking

Help is needed before each session to prepare the evening meal. It might be possible to do this at the venue, depending on the venue's facilities, and alternatively volunteers can cook at home and bring the food in for the evening shift. See page 8 for some information on food hygiene and cooking safety.

The Evening Shift

Volunteers can give as much time as they are able to and are welcome to come just for an hour or for anything up to the whole shift. Some people prefer to come early and help with the meal preparation and the setting up of the venue. Other jobs are serving, chatting to guests or washing up.

7.00pm (Starting times vary for each venue) – onwards:

Set up tables and chairs for meals

Put on urn/kettle for tea/coffee.

Begin meal preparation.

Check toilets area for cleanliness, soap, towels, etc.

7:45pm: The Venue Coordinator will bring the whole team together to pass on any important notices and to introduce new faces. We will also make everybody aware of any incidents, problems or concerns.

Jobs will be allocated to volunteers, e.g. reception/serving drinks/food. This is also a chance to ensure that all volunteers are aware of the rules, where the fire exits are, the names of their colleagues for the evening, and to link new volunteers with experienced volunteers.

7:55pm: Teams usually pray before opening.

8:00pm: Open doors, welcome and register guests and serve tea, coffee, hot chocolate.

Start mingling with the guests and offering companionship

8:30pm: Serve main meal. Volunteers and guests are encouraged to sit down and eat together.

10:00pm: End of shift

Overnight Team come on duty and handover with Venue Coordinator

10.30pm: Doors closed

11.00pm: Lights out

Overnight Shift

A minimum of two persons cover the overnight shift. One is the Night Awake Worker who is a paid and experienced member of staff - they are vigilant through the night ensuring guests are safe and comfortable. They are assisted by night awake volunteers, who take shifts at staying awake through the night to assist the Night Awake Worker if necessary. We aim to have three night awake volunteers each evening, so that each volunteer only needs to be awake for around two hours, however this may change depending on how many night awake volunteers there are on an evening. When it is not your time to stay awake, you will be able to sleep in a bed provided. Alternatively, in some venues where the night awake volunteer can sleep close enough to be woken quickly if necessary, they may not need to stay awake.

11pm – 5.00am: Volunteers take it in turns to stay awake to assist the Night Awake Worker

5.00am: Switch the urn on

5.50am: Wake up guests

Morning Shift

Also known as the breakfast shift. Guests do like to see volunteers helping to prepare and serve drinks and breakfast. Don't expect conversation to be as good as in the evening and be ready to see people trudging off into cold winter mornings

6.00am: Arrive and begin breakfast preparation.

The guests are woken up, wash, etc.

Sleeping mats and blankets etc. folded and put away.

6.10am: Breakfast is served.

6.50am: Last teas & coffees served

7:30am: Guests leave.

Ensure venue is left clean and tidy. Night Awake Worker makes final check to see building is secure.

Night Shelter Rules for Guests

The rules for guests at the night shelters are very simple. These are as follows:

- 1.) No drugs in or around the night shelter**
- 2.) No alcohol in or around the night shelter**
- 3.) No anti-social behaviour of any kind**
- 4.) No possession of an object that can be used as a weapon**
- 5.) No leaving the shelter after 8pm if wishing to return to sleep.**
- 6.) Respect our neighbours and the local neighbourhood.**

We appreciate that some guests may have been drinking before they attend the shelter, and this does not in itself mean they will be excluded, however if either the Shelter Caseworker or the Shelter Co-ordinator are uncomfortable with admitting a guest, the guest will not be admitted.

These rules are enforced in order to ensure the safety of everyone within the shelter. If guests break these rules they may well be asked to leave the night shelter for that evening and, in more extreme circumstances, they may be excluded for a longer period. As volunteers, we ask you to report any breach of these rules to either the Venue Coordinator or the Shelter Caseworker (see page 2 for contact details).

Admitting guests to the shelter

The night shelters accommodate 30 men and women over the age of 18 years and a waiting list ensures the fairest method for entry to the night shelters.

- FCENS works with people who have a local connection to Waltham Forest. We will work with No Second Night Out to accommodate referrals from them who have a local connection. Guests who do not have a local connection will be offered a bed for one night only if it is available and be required to return to their borough of origin to be accommodated on subsequent nights.
- The referral procedure into the shelter for guests is to telephone the Shelter Caseworker in order to secure a bed for that night if available. Guests should not be encouraged by any third parties to turn up at any shelter venue without first contacting the Shelter Caseworker. The telephone number is available in the shelter, Day Centre or on our website and at other venues e.g. libraries in the Borough.
- All guests will be asked to complete an initial assessment and sign an agreement to say that they comply with our boundaries as stated earlier. If a guest stayed the night before and was signed in by the Shelter Caseworker he/she will automatically have a place the next night. The aim of this is to prevent large crowds congregating around the shelter before it opens.
- Those who did not stay the night before will be offered a place on the waiting list if they are at the shelter between 7.30pm and 8.00pm.
- Guests will be offered a bed for a period of 28 days during which time they must show us that they want to engage with us and our casework service. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Shelter Co-ordinator. Guests who are uncooperative or do not engage with the services offered will be asked to leave the shelter at the end of this period.

□ The doors open at 8 o'clock and the first people to be signed in are those who stayed the night before. Vacancies will be filled by individuals at the top of the list. If an individual is offered a place from the top of the waiting list, but is NOT present then their name will be removed from the list and they will have to start the process again from the bottom of the list.

□ If either the Shelter Caseworker or the Venue Coordinator believes that a guest is likely to be anti-social during an evening, either as a result of alcohol or drug use, or for any other reason, that guest will not be admitted.

□ The Shelter unfortunately does not have the resources or expertise to deal with guests who are mentally or physically unwell, therefore does not admit guests who are being discharged directly from any hospital, health trust or similar facility (including in particular Whipps Cross University Hospital), except in exceptional circumstances, in which case it will be at the Shelter Caseworker's discretion.

FOOD HYGIENE AND KITCHEN SAFETY

Preparation

Food should be thoroughly cooked to a core temperature of at least 75°C and kept at that temperature for at least 2 minutes. If you are cooking a casserole (or something similar) the core temperature should be taken from the centre of a piece of meat.

Cooling

Cool food rapidly before putting in the refrigerator. Food should not stand around for more than 90 minutes. Food can be cooled quickly by standing in cold or iced water.

Reheating

Reheating should be avoided, however if you do need to reheat something the food should be heated until it has reached a core temperature of at least 75°C and kept at that temperature for at least 2 minutes.

Microwaves

If food is being cooked or heated in a microwave please be especially careful to ensure that every part of the food is thoroughly heated. Microwaves can often heat food unevenly, so you may need to stir and move the food around to ensure it is all heated properly.

Serving

Hot food must be served at a temperature of at least 63°C.

Having someone who has Level 2 Food Safety is very desirable. It is a simple online course and shouldn't take more than a couple of hours.

INTERACTING WITH GUESTS

The following section aims to raise your awareness of difficult situations – not to put you off volunteering! The vast majority of our sessions are incident-free, however you do need to be aware of certain rules to keep you and the guests safe, and to help you deal with any incidents that may arise. If this section makes you anxious, please ask to speak to one of our experienced volunteers, who can give reassurance and answer your questions.

Working as a Team

Never work alone in any area of the venue. This rule is for the protection both of yourself and of the guests many of whom are very vulnerable. Always make sure that someone else knows where you are. If you should have to go anywhere with a guest, always get someone to go with you. **NEVER** find yourself alone in a room, or leave someone alone in a room with a guest should it be necessary to leave the main area of the venue for any reason.

Threatening Situations

Most of the time the shelters are a calm and happy place for guests and volunteers, but please be aware that you may see a guest being angry or aggressive. The most important point here is that **as a volunteer you have absolutely no responsibility for responding to this behaviour**. This is the responsibility of the Shelter Caseworker and Venue Coordinator. If they ask you to support them, perhaps by calling the police or moving away from a certain area, then please do this. The Caseworker and the Coordinators have the experience and ability to deal with these situations and will know what course of action to take.

Although it is unlikely, if at any time you are in a situation you cannot handle, **the golden rule is to back off**. For example, if someone starts shouting at you, do not shout back. Speak gently and clearly and avoid being drawn into further argument. The aim is to ensure that the person does not become more irritated and starts to calm down.

Remember that your first duty is to yourself. When faced by a person acting aggressively, the first priority is to ensure your own personal safety. If there is the potential for the situation to become more serious, search for and establish an escape route. Never turn your back; and be prepared to move very quickly if necessary! If you feel someone else is in a threatening situation, get help for them as quickly as possible.

After being involved in a threatening situation, a person may feel scared or embarrassed. At these times it is always better to admit to these emotions and find someone to talk to and share with them what you are feeling.

Health and Safety

Working with a large number of vulnerable people, we are very aware of health and safety issues. The Venue Coordinator is responsible for Health and Safety. They check access to fire escapes, positions of fire extinguishers and make sure First Aid and safety equipment is available.

Everyone has a responsibility to ensure that we provide a safe environment. If you see something which is unsafe, or could become unsafe, then either solve the problem and tell the Venue Coordinator what you have done, or ask them to deal with it.

Boundaries

Never disclose personal details such as surname, address or workplace to guests. If you feel there might be a constructive reason for doing so, then contact the Venue Coordinator to discuss it. If you do

give out details without consulting the Venue Coordinator or the Shelter Caseworker first, FCENS reserves the right to prevent you from volunteering with us in future. This rule is for your own safety and for the safety of our guests.

For the same reasons, FCENS also insist that, as a volunteer, you do not arrange to meet with or make any contact with guests away from the shelter unless it is an activity specifically approved by FCENS. This includes phone calls and e-mails.

Another important rule is: **NEVER give out money to guests, no matter how small the amount.** If a guest says that they need money to get to an appointment or any other important reason – please ask them to speak to the Venue Coordinator or speak to the Venue Coordinator on their behalf.

Respecting Others

Perhaps the most important role as a volunteer is to offer every person who uses the shelters the respect they deserve as a member of society. This means that as a group of volunteers or staff we do NOT patronise the people using the project, but instead welcome them as fellow human beings. This way we can offer our guests an ambience in which they may feel safe to express themselves and, we hope, have an increased sense of self-confidence which may help them to take a move away from homelessness.

You may also feel curious about some guest's life experiences. Please understand that some of the guests may feel let down or deeply saddened by these and may not want to talk about them.

However, some guests do like to talk about their experiences. We ask you to respect their privacy and not to repeat anything you may hear in conversation with another person while at the night shelter. However, if you hear information that you feel could compromise the safety of anyone in the night shelter, then we ask you to pass this on to the Shelter Caseworker immediately (see page 2 for contact details).

Please do not make any promises. We want our guests to trust in our service and to work with us to improve it. If we fail to develop that level of trust, it will have a bad effect on our guests and the service we provide. We may raise false expectations and make the job of the staff far more difficult.

Offering Support as a Christian

FCENS is a Christian project, however, this does not mean that we do not welcome guests, staff and volunteers who are not Christian. Above all, we do not force any belief – religious, political, moral or any other on those around us. Christian beliefs and fellowship provided the motivation to start the project and continue to provide the inspiration for much of the work that goes on. However, treating each person as an equal means respecting their views and not trying to force your own views onto other, sometimes very vulnerable, people. In short, as a volunteer we ask you not to proselytise.

Valuables

We advise you not to bring valuable items to the shelter as FCENS is not responsible for anything that goes missing. We are aware that you may have handbags, briefcases, mobile phones etc., with you. Please ask the Venue Coordinator where these can be stored. However, even if stored away, FCENS is not responsible for these items or for their loss.

Support Offered to Volunteers

If you feel you need any emotional support during/after your time spent at the shelter, please don't hesitate to talk to someone. If you don't feel comfortable speaking to either the Venue Coordinator or

the Shelter Caseworker then perhaps you may want to talk to another volunteer. There are always people ready to listen.

DBS checks (formerly CRB checks)

All Shelter Coordinators must complete a DBS check (a Disclosure Barring Check for relevant criminal convictions, formerly known as a CRB check). If you, as a volunteer, would like a DBS check, please let us know and we can arrange this.

Minimum and Maximum Age

We do not allow anyone under the age of 18 to volunteer alone due to safety concerns and because they are not covered by our insurance. If you would like to talk to someone about this, please contact the Shelter Caseworker (see page 2 for contact details). Unfortunately, our indemnity insurance does not cover anyone over the age of 70 either. If you would like to volunteer but are over the age of 70, we welcome you, as long as you understand that you are not insured and that you volunteer at your own risk. We do have many older volunteers who are valuable and happy members of our teams.

Vulnerable Adults

Many people who use the shelters are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because of their personal difficulties. FCENS has a legal obligation to ensure that all our guests stay in a safe environment and that none of our guests are abused or exploited in any way.

If you feel that any of our guests may be at risk from any person (e.g. staff member/volunteer/other guest) or for any other reason, you must inform the Venue Coordinator immediately. You can also contact the Shelter Caseworker (see page 2 for contact details). If you have good reason not to report to either the Caseworker or the Coordinator, please ask to be put in touch with a member of the Management Team.

Remember, if you witness or suspect inappropriate behaviour in the shelters – you must report it. Our lead Safeguarding officer is David Britton (Chair of FCENS) Tel: 07732 135 178 / 020 8279 7738
E-mail: rev.britton@gmail.com

If you have a concern regarding the safety of a guest or a safeguarding concern about a venue, please contact:

Tunde Rotinwa (FCENS Caseworker)

Tel: 07739 870 411

E-mail: caseworker@forestnightshelter.org.uk

OR

David Britton (Chair of FCENS)

Tel: 07732 135 178 / 020 8279 7738

E-mail: rev.britton@gmail.com

If you have a safeguarding concern regarding a member of staff or volunteer or a more general concern about the safeguarding practices of the organisation, please contact:

David Britton (Chair of FCENS)

Tel: 07732 135 178 / 020 8279 7738

E-mail: rev.britton@gmail.com

OR

David Baker (Trustee)

Tel: 07845 043 188

E-mail: davidmbaker@hotmail.com

The Golden Rules of Volunteering

Last but not least, please remember these important rules of working as a volunteer with FCENS. For your own safety, and the safety of others, we could intervene and might stop you from volunteering should you break these basic rules:

- Respect the people you meet at the shelters and treat them accordingly
- Don't give out personal details
- Don't contact a guest outside the shelters e.g. telephone calls, meetings, emails
- Don't carry valuables in the shelters
- Don't give away money
- Never work alone
- Alcohol and drugs are strictly prohibited from the shelters, as is being under the influence of them if this is causing anti-social behaviour

Exclusion policy

The Shelter Caseworker and Venue Coordinators have the right to refuse entry to anyone on the grounds of ensuring the health and safety of everyone in the shelter. If an individual is behaving in an anti-social manner, then the Shelter Caseworker and the Venue Coordinator hold the right to refuse entry to any or all of the shelters. The Venue Coordinator has the final say on who can stay in their venue.

There are four possible courses of action available for guests who break the rules

- Formal Warning
- Exclusion from the shelter for one night
- Exclusion for a specified period
- Permanent Exclusion

FCENS POLICIES

Further details of FCENS policies are available from the website .
www.forestnightshelter.org.uk/volunteer

These include:

- Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Confidentiality Policy

*****ESSENTIAL: ALL VOLUNTEERS MUST READ OUR POLICIES ON SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS BEFORE THEIR FIRST SESSION*****

HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE ON THE STREET

Many volunteers feel motivated to do more for homeless people once they have shared time with our guests

There are other indirect ways that you can help homeless people. Confidence is usually very low when someone is living on the streets, so if you meet someone who is homeless treat them with respect and friendliness. Ignoring someone can make them feel even more marginalised. Many homeless people feel frustrated that 'the system' may have let them down and after a period of living on the streets, often feel disillusioned. Encouraging people to contact a service or make an appointment could help them towards a new start.

An information card, produced by FCENS is available from the Shelter Caseworker. Volunteers are welcome to take some of these cards to hand to people on the streets.

If you have a particular concern about a homeless person, please contact the Shelter Caseworker.

In conclusion, thank you for offering to volunteer with FCENS.

St Mary's Parish Office
The Welcome Centre
8 Church End
Walthamstow
E17 9RJ

Email: info@forestnightshelter.org.uk

Web: www.forestnightshelter.org.uk



VOLUNTEER DECLARATION- Sign and return to Co-ordinator

All volunteers must sign to say they have read and will abide by the policies and procedures of the Volunteer handbook and that they are aware of the policies of FCENS (especially Vulnerable Adults & Safeguarding policies) available on the website www.forestnightshelter.org.uk and from your Venue Coordinator. You should also sign in with your venue each time you volunteer

Signed

Print name

Date

Venue

Signature of Co-ordinator:

Please tick that you have read and understand the following golden rules:

- Respect the people you meet at the shelters and treat them accordingly
- Don't give out personal details
- Don't contact a guest outside the shelters e.g. telephone calls, meetings, emails
- Don't carry valuables in the shelters
- Don't give away money
- Never work alone
- Alcohol and drugs are strictly prohibited from the shelters, as is being under the influence of them if this is causing antisocial behaviour
- I have read the Vulnerable Adults & Safeguarding policies

VOLUNTEER DECLARATION - Your copy

All volunteers must sign to say they have read and will abide by the policies and procedures of the Volunteer handbook and that they are aware of the policies of FCENS (especially Vulnerable Adults & Safeguarding policies) available on the website www.forestnightshelter.org.uk and from your Venue Coordinator. You should also sign in with your venue each time you volunteer

Signed

Print name

Date

Venue

Signature of Co-ordinator:

Please tick that you have read and understand the following golden rules:

- Respect the people you meet at the shelters and treat them accordingly
- Don't give out personal details
- Don't contact a guest outside the shelters e.g. telephone calls, meetings, emails
- Don't carry valuables in the shelters
- Don't give away money
- Never work alone
- Alcohol and drugs are strictly prohibited from the shelters, as is being under the influence of them if this is causing anti-social behaviour
- I have read the Vulnerable Adults & Safeguarding policies