

WELWYN HATFIELD WOMEN'S REFUGE & SUPPORT SERVICES RECRUITMENT PACK - CHAIR



Registered Charity Number 1156186



About Us

Overview

We are a small, local independent Refuge with an annual turnover of approximately £250,000. Some of our services are subcontracted to the lead provider of domestic abuse services in Hertfordshire. This is a new delivery model that came into effect in October 2017, initially for two years. We were recently awarded a three year grant from Children in Need for our children's services.

Our Aim

To provide safe accommodation and help and support in the community to women and children who have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused.

Legal and Administrative Information

Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge & Support Services (WHWR) is a Registered Charitable Organisation (number 1156186). The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees that includes a nominated representative from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, our major core funder. The full Board meets every six weeks while sub-groups meet at varying intervals and report to the full Board. We are governed by a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The organisation is a full member of the Women's Aid Federation England and works within the good practice guidelines laid down by the Federation.

Objectives and Activities

Our Objectives

To provide specialist services to women and children who have experienced or are living with domestic violence and abuse, in particular through the provision of:

- safe, temporary accommodation
- information, guidance, practical and emotional support
- drop-in sessions and Outreach provision in the community
- a telephone helpline
- specialist services for children in the Refuge

The Refuge House

The Refuge house is owned by Aldwyck Housing Group and is managed as a Refuge by WHWR. The organisation pays rent to Aldwyck Housing Group for its use of the property.

The Refuge provides temporary, crisis accommodation for up to 10 women and their children fleeing domestic violence and abuse. We operate a four month shorthold tenancy governed by an excluded accommodation licence. During their time with us women are offered practical and emotional support in order to help them begin to recover from their experiences of violence and abuse and move on to a life free from fear.

Two women are killed by a current or former partner each week in this country and Refuge is usually the only choice for the women and children who stay with us. For this reason it is very important to the Refuge Organisation that we strive to offer a high standard of accommodation and services to women and children escaping domestic violence. We believe they should all receive the best we can possibly offer.

While their crisis has usually passed after four months in the Refuge, women may find their stay extended for a number of reasons. Women who have successfully presented as homeless due to domestic abuse to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council can be granted limited extensions to their accommodation licence while they wait for a suitable property. Women who intend to stay in the Borough but are waiting for a decision from the UK Visas and Immigration Department on their leave to remain in the UK, or women whose children have been removed by Social Services and who are waiting for final Court hearings to determine whether or not they will be returned may also be granted limited extensions to their accommodation licence while these issues are resolved.

We are very fortunate in that, with funding from the DCLG and the ongoing support of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, we are able to operate a second stage property that helps to prepare women and children for their return to independent living in the community.

The Role

Purpose

1. Provide leadership and ensure that the Board fulfils its responsibilities for providing strategic direction and efficient governance of Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge and Support Services.
2. Manage The Refuge Manager, helping the post holder to achieve the aims of The Refuge.
3. Maintain an effective working relationship between the Board and The Refuge Staff.

Responsibilities

In addition to the general responsibilities of a trustee, duties of the Chair include the following:

1. Chair meetings of the Board and General Meetings of The Refuge.
2. In consultation with the Secretary agree the agenda for all meetings.
3. Undertake Chair's duties as specified in the policies of The Refuge.
4. Between meetings of the Board take any necessary or emergency action to enable the business of The Refuge to be carried out effectively, reporting such actions to the next meeting of the Board for ratification as appropriate. This action may be taken in consultation with Officers, individual Trustees or The Refuge Manager.
5. Meet regularly with The Refuge Manager and undertake an annual appraisal of her performance.
6. Select panels for interviewing prospective Trustees and for the appointment of staff.
7. Ensure that the induction of new Trustees enables them to understand their responsibilities.
8. Be aware and identify any development and training needs of the Board.
9. Ensure Sub-Group membership is reviewed periodically.
10. Ensure the Board seeks outside professional advice when required.
11. Act as principal ambassador and spokesperson for The Refuge.

Person specification

The chair should be able to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills and experience:

- Leadership skills including:
 - Chairing effective meetings
 - Ability to optimise the use of a diverse mix of skills and experience and to identify gaps which may be a barrier to the effective working of the Board
- Experience of managing staff
- Experience of being a charity trustee
- Knowledge of domestic abuse or a relevant related field
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences.

Time commitment

The role requires both day and evening work. Board meetings are held every six weeks from approximately 7.30pm – 9.30pm. The Chair also meets regularly with the Refuge Manager and leads sub-groups of the Board.

Remuneration

The position is voluntary and unpaid. Reasonable expenses, supported by receipts, will be reimbursed.