



## The Gatehouse Managing Risk Policy

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### Introduction

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The Gatehouse is a community drop-in centre offering free support services for adults who are; homeless, vulnerably housed, on low income and/or looking for company & community. The Gatehouse offers a free community centre with a cafe (six evenings a week), therapeutic and practical workshops, a shower and clothing service, a counselling service, one-to-one casework support and facilitates the Lived Experience Advisory Forum in partnership with Aspire and Oxfordshire Homeless Movement. For more information please see <https://oxfordgatehouse.org/>

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all the Gatehouse staff and volunteers are aware of the basic safety procedures in order to minimise risk. The informal approach used at the Gatehouse means that we do not operate a formal referral and assessment process, and we also hold very basic personal information on the people who use the project (Guests) particularly in the café as it is a drop in service. This means assessing risk before a person enters the building or before a café session (in particular) starts is not always possible.

The project aims to work without judgement of the Guests and their current circumstances. This means people are not excluded from the café setting if they are under the influence of alcohol or/and illegal or legal drugs. However, no usage of any substance is allowed in the building.

### Mitigating risk procedures

The following guidelines are set out under different sub-headings and explains how to manage risk in a range of situations/scenarios.

#### Lone Working

For the purpose of this policy lone working will be categorised as working alone and/or one to one with Guests of the project. Please read this policy in conjunction with the Gatehouse Professional Boundaries Policy.

- The Gatehouse staff and volunteers do not ever work alone or one to one with Guests of the project. We do not deliver regulated activity but staff are Basic DBS checked (Disclosure and Barring System).
- The above can apply to inside the projects building, e.g. if you are working alone in the building (outside of sessional hours) and a Guest turns up and asks to enter. It also applies to areas in the building which are not monitored when we are open for a session e.g. the toilets, store cupboard, office or the back entrance to the building.

- The above also applies to meeting a Guest outside of the building and a session. Please also read the Gatehouse Professional Boundaries.
- A minimum of two Project Workers should be on shift for a session to be able to open and operate and a minimum of a team of nine (a mixture of staff and volunteers) should be on shift for a session to be able to open and operate.
- When we are open for a session, the Guest main entrance and the main hall should be manned by a Project Worker at all times.

### **Drug (legal or illegal) and alcohol use in the building**

The Gatehouse has a zero tolerance policy to drug/alcohol use and drug dealing in the project. However, we do not exclude people who may use any of the above from using the project unless they display behaviour that is deemed to be a risk to others.

- If a Guest has alcohol on their person but needs to use the service, the alcohol can either be left at the door or a staff member will put it in the office and give it back to Guest when they leave. If the Guest does not consent to either of the above, then they cannot access the project that evening.
- If a Guest is suspected of using drugs/alcohol and/or drug dealing in the building, they will be banned from the project (length of time to be decided by the Coordinator and staff team).
- If there is evidence of a Guest using drugs/alcohol and/or drug dealing in the building they will be banned from the project (length of time to be decided by the Coordinator and staff team working the session).
- If there is evidence of drug dealing at the project, the Gatehouse will have no option but to report the incident to the local police.
- A copy of a ban letter will be given to the Guest (whenever possible), outlining the reason and length of ban. This will then be documented in the diary by the Coordinator/Senior Project Worker to ensure consistency across different teams on different nights.
- The only private space inside the project to carry out any drug use, is in three toilets. Posters will be put on the toilet doors each session explaining to Guests of the above process.
- If any drug paraphernalia is found on the premises, then only paid staff can dispose of it in a safe and appropriate manners and use the sharps box in the office.

### **Drug (legal or illegal) and alcohol use in the Garden (in sessional hours)**

The Gatehouse has a garden area joined to the building that is for people to be able to sit outside in the warmer months and for those who bring dogs with them.

- Normally, in the months from June to August, a third staff member is designated to work with Guests in the garden area. The presence of a staff member is an attempt to minimise any anti-social behaviour in the space in the times that the project is open. ASB can include incessant barking dogs, hard drug use and loud challenging behaviour.
- The Gatehouse has a service level agreement with Thames Valley Police and the City Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the following applies in relation to garden activity.
- It is not illegal to drink alcohol in the garden area, however we do not encourage large groups of people gathering together and we can ask people to move on. If any anti-social behaviour is involved, we will ask a person to move on or call the police if it is deemed too high risk.
- If legal or illegal drugs are used in the garden area, we will ask a person to move on. If any anti-social behaviour is involved, we will ask a person to move on or call the police if it is deemed too high a risk.
- Any activity (including the above) in the garden would be recorded in the diary so that we can monitor and review management of the space.

## **Working 'On the Door'**

In normal times, the double doors at the project is the main entrance for Guests. The doors are manned throughout the whole session. The main purpose of this is to ensure that; substances are not being brought into the building, drug use is not taking place in the toilet, anti-social behaviour is being monitored in the garden and anybody deemed to be potentially a risk to others is not able to access the building that night.

- A minimum of one staff member and one volunteer should be working on the door for the whole two-hour session (rotated every hour). When capacity allows, a second volunteer should work on the door to act as a runner and an extra pair of eyes.
- The staff member and volunteer are not to leave the door until the next staff member and volunteer turn up to take over. If Guests request tasks of the people on the door those tasks are to be designated to somebody else.
- Another aim of having two people on the door is to ensure the length of time the toilets are being used and what for. If a person is in the toilet for an excessive length of time, then the staff member can ask the person to come out. If somebody is doing this consistently we can ban them in relation to suspected drug use, even without evidence.

## **Managing challenging behaviour**

For the purpose of this policy challenging behaviour will be categorised as any behaviour that is deemed to be a risk or nuisance to others and/or the premises. This can include verbal and physical aggression.

- It is not the role of a volunteer to manage verbal or physical aggression or nuisance behaviour from Guests of the project. If such an occasion should arise, the volunteer is to remove themselves as quickly as possible.
- It is the Project Workers who intervene and ultimately make the decision on how to manage verbal and physical aggression or nuisance behaviour. This may start with only one Project Worker but the other Project Workers should immediately be close to hand to offer assistance if needed. If the Project Worker gives instructions to the rest of the team, these need to be adhered to.
- Whenever possible, the person who is a risk or nuisance to others should be warned that they could be banned if they continue.
- If this is not possible then the person will be asked and escorted to leave the building. It is Gatehouse policy to close the main Guest entrance doors, until the person has left the garden area. If necessary, the police will be called to escort a person off of the premises.
- It may be necessary to move other Guests from the premises to ensure their safety.
- It is the role of the coordinator and senior project workers to ensure the safety and smooth running of the volunteer team and service, when such an incident arises.
- The coordinator and the project workers will then decide whether a ban should be placed and the length of time. The project worker delivers the ban (the next available opportunity).
- Staff and volunteers should never leave the premises and walk with Guests after the project is closed, whether the Guest is deemed to be a risk to others or not. Buddy up, if necessary.

## **Under 25's**

The Gatehouse works with people who are 25 and over in the café setting. This is for several reasons which include; we cannot be certain that a person is 18 years old and not classed as a child (some people will be classed as a child until the age of 19), the vulnerability and potential safeguarding issues related to young people, the historical volatility of merging the two groups and that we are volunteer led and cannot responsibly meet the needs of young people.

- We will serve young people who are 18 or over with food and drink at the door in the café setting. If a person appears to be under the age of 18 we would alert Social Services immediately.

- If we suspect a person is under 25 in the café setting, we will ask for some evidence of age. We will not allow a person to access the building until we have this.
- A person under the age of 25 cannot access any part of the building, even the toilets in the café setting. We will take the person's food and drink order at the door and another volunteer will get this.
- We will signpost and refer a person 18 or over to our internal or external age appropriate services (with consent).

Katrina Horne  
CEO  
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