

Rahab Volunteer Information Pack

Thank you for your interest in joining the Rahab team

Rahab is part of The Mustard Tree Foundation, and we are passionate that everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Rahab supports women who work in the sex industry, to support them to break free from the cycles of abuse, poverty and addiction.

We do this by:

- Providing a outreach service on the streets.
- Providing a daytime drop in for the women to meet
- Encouraging befriending and mentoring services
- Working with partners to support women
- Advocating on behalf of the women.
- Referring women to our partners for support including housing and benefits.
- Visiting in prisons and hospitals.
- Supporting women as they come out of prison.
- Providing well-being support and promoting sexual health.
- Having a regular prayer walk in partnership with local churches.

Our History

Rahab became a Mustard Tree project in 2005. The project was developed by a partnership of local Christian charities and churches. A steering group was formed who attended the National Christian Alliance on Prostitution conference in Oct that year and night outreach began the next month.

The outreach was designed to reach and offer support and befriending to women who were sex working in the local area. The initial need assessment identified the need for people to engage with the women without requiring them to attend appointments. Thames Valley Police, saw an outreach service as being essential to break the cycle of re-offending, and asked whether MTF could offer support to female sex workers prior to arrest.

Almost two decades later, we're still predominantly a voluntary organisation. We have continued to go on night outreach throughout those years, and now offer day-time support as well. The support we offer is holistic and involves addressing both practical and emotional needs. Our aim is to enable women to make positive choices, which includes journeying alongside them on issues that are important to them, ranging from help with housing, benefits, education & employment, assistance through court processes, advocating at meetings, medical visits, arranging food & clothes parcels, amongst others.

We pride ourselves on the commitment of our staff and volunteers to valuing each person and building relationships, looking to empower individuals to seek opportunities, enabling them to make positive changes in their lives. This allows us to break into the cycle of abuse, poverty and addiction.

Our values

As a project of The Mustard Tree we aim to:

- Reduce health and social inequalities
- Build stronger more connected communities
- Give a voice to the unheard

The Rahab team seek to restore hope and belief. Many of the women we support face barriers and challenges, so we journey with them to make positive choices and access opportunities.

We offer a service that is centred around the needs of the individual. Many of the women have complex needs and change can often take time as behaviours have often become entrenched due to adverse childhood experiences and prolonged trauma. We follow the five principles of trauma informed care:

Safety: Our outreach supports the safety of the women.

Choice: We talk to the women about the choices that they have in their life and help them seek out opportunities and to engage with other services.

Collaboration: We work flexibly with the women to develop our support and put in place what they want and need.

Trustworthiness: We cannot do what we do if the women do not trust us. One of the women said to us recently that if they ask for something, we will always try to help and deliver on what was promised.

Empowerment: We listen and do not judge. We walk alongside them supporting them to change their lives, empowering them to make a positive change for good.

Our holistic approach is surrounded by prayer which enables us to facilitate the best possible outcomes and sustained change. Jesus loved the marginalised and misunderstood. He spent time with people who were excluded from society and created opportunities for change. All of our volunteers and team aim to follow His example by seeking to reflect that inclusive nature and compassion to those we serve as we recognise each person's value.

What is a typical night like?

We are out three or four nights a week from 9.30pm to 11pm in a place where the women know where to find us. There is no typical night out – sometimes we see eight women other times we see two. We wait for the women to approach us.

When the volunteer team meets up, the first thing to do is pray together.

We have a thermal jug full of hot water and bags loaded with chocolate, toiletries, condoms – which we give out in a pack of six, personal alarms, gloves (in the winter) and any other supplies that the women have asked for or that we feel they will need.

Volunteering with the Rahab team

Our volunteers are absolutely amazing! They are out in all weathers wanting to demonstrate Gods love to these women. They come from churches all over the Reading area.

'I just wanted to comment that it's a privilege to be able to go out on the streets and meet these lovely women. Most of them are very chatty and appreciative of us being willing to meet them. Some are amazed that we give up our own time to see them voluntarily.'

We ask our volunteers to commit to just two nights a month, although some are out more.

We provide training and each outreach is led by a team leader. Our training includes:

- Safeguarding training to Adult Safeguarding to Level 1.
- Sexual Exploitation Awareness: The signs to look for to identify sexual exploitation.
- Rahab induction.

Regular training opportunities and updates are provided to the volunteer team.

'I started volunteering for Rahab because I wanted to help a group of women who are often marginalised and who are so vulnerable to sexual violence. Over the past two to three years, though, individual people with real lives and diverse personalities began to merge from the many face we see, I feel so privileged to see beyond a blanket group and come alongside individual women as they go through the ups and downs of life.'

FAQs

What hours is the Rahab night-time outreach ?

We are out three or four nights Mon-to Fri from 9.30pm to 11pm.

What kind of time commitment do you ask from your volunteers?

We ask volunteers to commit to two evenings a month (three hours in total).

Is there opportunity to support the women in the day?

Yes we are developing a day time team to support women for example at appointments, visiting them in prison and befriending. This can be in addition to nighttime outreach or instead of.

Do Rahab volunteers need to be Christians?

Yes. we pray at the beginning and end of the outreach and regularly with the women.

What are the risks of night-time outreach?

We have a risk assessment in place and if any team feel threatened or insecure in anyway the team leader will make the decision to call the police and/or leave.

What skills does a volunteer need?

The skills needed are the ability to chat to anyone and everyone, not to judge, to be compassionate and care.

What are the next steps?

Give us a call, or complete a volunteer application form which can be downloaded from the website or by emailing rahab@themustardtree.org. Once we have received it we will begin the process of

obtaining references and completing a DBS check and if that is all OK, we begin the training and induction process.

For more information visit rahab.co.uk or click on the QR code.

Thank you for your interest.