

## Listening Volunteers Meeting

23 Jan 2024

Present – Chris, Rob, Dean, Mark, Tatyana, Kenny, Michele, Sean  
Introductions

Presentation – Andy Brett – Board of Trustees



Andy led us in a team building exercise. You had to be there to appreciate it! 😊

Andy talked about volunteering in all its forms. His history of volunteering with THT London and then Counselling with Switchboard about 8 years ago, then more recently as a trustee.

Talked about the seriousness at THT and how challenging that was but enjoyable. So trained as a counsellor.

Talked about his background in HR, in financial services and others. After Pandemic wanted to volunteer again and found Switchboard. Being on the board is different. Doesn't get to meet service users. Trustees are directors so are individually accountable for the running of the organisation. Other than that, it's much like other volunteering.

People shared thoughts on what volunteering was about. Also asked Andy how he sees the org going in the right direction. Andy talked about the direction of Switchboard and the strategy wrt funding security.

Dean mentioned a working group to address the next strategy. Andy made note of his keenness!

We all enjoyed getting to know Andy a bit better.

## Rest of meeting

Chris talked about related items of Call volume, difficult regular callers, lower volunteer rate.

General discussion around how to deal with challenging regular calls.

### Plan for stuck calls

Chris suggested the following process for addressing regular callers who never seem to get anywhere, or bring up new issues

Put on a plan where volunteers

- 1 Tell them that I would like to speak to them to make sure the service is meeting their needs
- 2 Tell them I want to speak to them.
- 3 Tell them I have to speak to them for the helpline to continue taking their calls.

Generally, most agreed that we don't really want to get to the point of blocking anyone. Even if a caller never seems to progress, they may be getting something positive from the service.

This can be applied to any regular caller who we are constantly going over the same issue week in week out.

We talked about creating a narrower script to deal with one or two regular callers who constantly repeat the same things. Kenny volunteered to make a start on one for one of them.

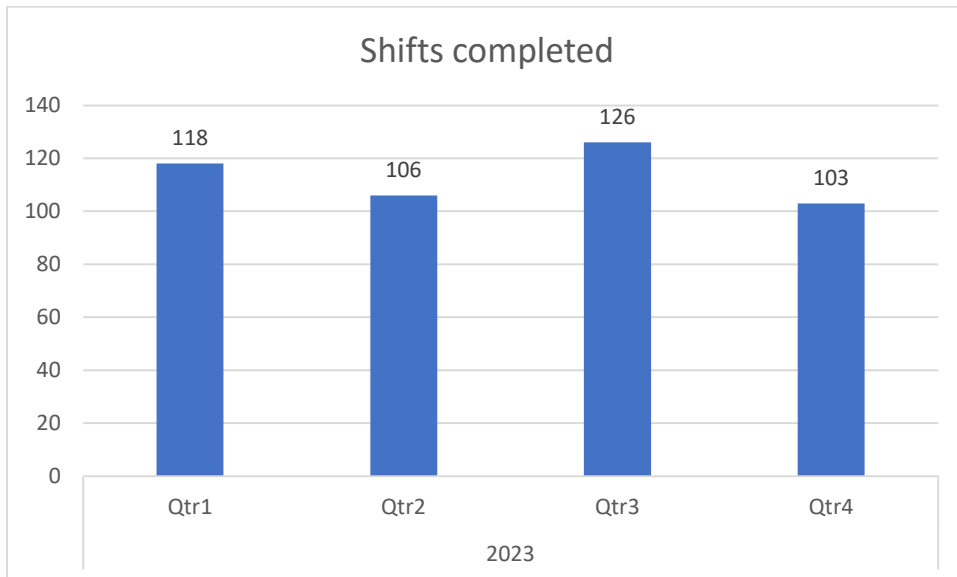
### New people coming on board.

- Up to 28 new volunteers joining switchboard, 25 of which want to work on the helpline.

### Call numbers

Last Quarter Oct-Dec saw the first drop in calls taken. While volume of calls is not necessarily our goal, this does correspond with a drop in the number of shifts completed. It seems clear that the more capacity we have on the helpline the more service users we are

able to support. Hopefully with the influx of new volunteers, we can have 3 people per night going forward.



With the influx of new volunteers I'd like to make sure that we have 3 volunteers per shift going forward. Shift staffing has been somewhat precarious in the past few months as mostly only 2 volunteers have been booked on which means one going sick or needing to work from home means we are scrambling for a substitute.

Meeting ran out of time, which was great. We look forward to the next meeting.