

Dear Friends

Please bear in mind when planning a visit:

**Firstly**, both shelters are small houses, which usually house 16 girls. On a weekend between 6 to 18 girls may be in the house, since many girls go home for the weekend.

**Secondly**, the best thing is to do something **with** rather than **for** the girls. The girls at Ons Plek usually love group gospel singing, so singing together or a sports morning is ideal.

**Thirdly** we obviously love **getting presents** of essentials such as stationary for school. These gifts **must** be given to the staff member, who will make sure the donation is used appropriately.

Please do not give anything (money, food, whatever) to any one girl or some of the girls, never mind how compelling her story sounds

Like all parents we know who is in need of what and who has just be given new books etc by us or other donors. Like all parents we also like to monitor how many chocolates a child is consuming at once and teach them to care for what they have. Anything that is given to girls should be given fairly and equally to all the girls, with permission from the child care worker on duty.

**Fourthly** while all donors want to see the children delight in their gifts please be aware that while they want the gifts they also do not want to be objects of charity. For this reason we accept all gifts on their behalf and distribute them later. Those who have been accustomed to begging also need to learn that there are other ways of relating to people better off than themselves which do not involve the receiving of material handouts. The children are aware of where the gifts come from and are taught to write thank you letters as any child living at home is.

**Lastly**, once off visits are really tricky in terms of chatting to the girls. Sometimes people with the best intentions leave both the girls and themselves confused and upset. The basic rule to prevent this from happening is as follows:

**Do NOT talk about the past, pain, private issues and problems.**

**DO chat about the present, positives and future dreams.**

For example asking a girl why she is at Ons Plek, where her family is, where her mother is, where she is from, whether she lived on the streets, what strolling/street life is like, how long she has been here, how she feels about being here, anything about sex, rape, abuse, drugs etc. are all totally **UNSUITABLE** topics. Girls all have regular counselling sessions with our professionals to discuss these matters.

Examples of **SUITABLE** topics would be sharing about your and her favourite TV programmes and personalities, your and her best liked sports and sporting heroes, favourite foods, fashion and hairdos, what she would like to do when she grows up, what she most likes doing and learning about, etc.

It is also important not to make promises to the girls with regard to future contact.

**Please do not swap facebook addresses and/or cellphone numbers.** If any visitor feels that they would be interested to volunteer at Ons Plek on a more consistent basis, they can contact Yumna/Charline for application materials. The

minimum commitment is for two hours per week for a year, and the minimum age 21 years.

**PHOTOGRAPHS:**

There are legal considerations in taking photographs of children at Ons Plek, since the children are protected by the Child Care Act. You may only take photographs of the girls (cell phones included) with the permission of the Director (Pam Jackson). Be careful who you send your photo's to-we do not place recognisable pictures of the children on facebook. All photographs intended for the girls must be given to the Unit Manager or Director. Some girls give photos of themselves to friends, leaving them with no record of their own lives. The person in charge makes sure that the photos are kept in the girls' life story albums rather than dispersed amongst their peers.

We hope this is not too much to absorb, but it is worth making sure one's visit is the blessing one wishes it to be.

Thank you for your willingness to show care and love to us at Ons Plek.

Yours Faithfully

Yumna Van Der Schyff  
Unit Manager / Volunteer Co-Ordinator