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## **Volunteering Policy**

### **Purpose of this Policy and Procedure**

To set out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers and is relevant to staff, volunteers and trustees within the organisation. It aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers. The **Volunteer Pack** gives further details about the support and procedures in place for volunteers.

### **Mission Statement**

We support volunteers across Monmouthshire to develop their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the community.

### **Our Commitments**

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of the organisation. Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims and complements the role of paid staff. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, its clients and the volunteers themselves. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will not be used to replace staff. We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and to encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, people with a disability, older people and people from ethnically diverse communities. We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteering. We recognise that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in many ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

## **What is a volunteer?**

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of our organisation, unpaid and of their own free choice. The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) defines volunteering as activity which:

- is undertaken freely, by choice
- is undertaken to be of public/ community benefit
- is not undertaken for financial gain.

Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering. Please refer to HR for further information about these. Trustees are volunteers with responsibility for governance of the organisation. Volunteers may be involved on a one – off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved:

- in the direct delivery of our services
- on our board of management as trustees
- in community engagement to raise awareness of our work
- in one off events and promotional activities
- in our offices or in community venues.

Volunteers are valued for:

- Bringing additional and diverse and new skills and perspectives to the organisations
- Enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- Championing our cause within the wider community
- Enhancing the quality of our work and of client experience
- Promoting the wellbeing of users of services, staff, local communities and themselves.

## **Who can volunteer?**

Almost anyone can volunteer regardless of gender, background and nationality, as long as the role is suitable for them. Here are some of the key points:

- Young people aged 14+ can volunteer

- UK citizens and people with indefinite leave to remain can volunteer
- EU/ EEA/ Swiss citizens can volunteer
- People on work or family visas can volunteer
- Visitors on a tourist visa can volunteer
- Asylum seekers can volunteer
- Refugees can volunteer.

### **Standards of good practice**

Our management practice is informed by the Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard for volunteer management.

### **Responsibility**

Volunteering is an integral part of the work that we do at the Bridges Centre and delivering our Wellbeing Projects. It is therefore a key responsibility of all staff, trustees and people working with us to understand the role of volunteering within the organisation.

Designated staff members (Volunteer Coordinators) are responsible for the development, management and co-ordination of voluntary activity within the organisation, including volunteering policies and procedures and the welfare of volunteers. All volunteers will have a designated and named staff member/volunteer for guidance, support and supervision. Staff responsibilities for volunteers will be explicitly referred to in their job/role description. The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for the organisation to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation. This is outlined in the **Volunteer Agreement** (part of the **Registration Form**).

### **Expectations**

Volunteers and organisations are expected to work together in a reciprocal and beneficial way.

### **Volunteer Agreement**

Bridges Centre undertakes to ensure that all volunteers are:

- Aware of the organisation's policies and procedures, relevant to their role
- Provided with introductory training where needed
- Provided with information regarding any individuals they are supporting
- Insured
- Supervised and supported by a supervisor as required

- **General Data Protection Regulation 2018**

At the Bridges Charity we are committed to complying with the General Data Protection regulations and good practice. Only those who need to have access to your data will be allowed to process your data. We will not share your details with any other organisations without your permission or request.

In exchange, volunteers are expected to:

- Work within the organisations existing policies and procedures.
- Respect the confidentiality of information received
- Attend relevant training
- Commit to the agreed volunteer arrangements and notify your supervisor if this is not possible
- Follow a non-judgemental and inclusive approach in their role
- Work under the direction of the supervisor
- Inform the supervisor of any changes in personal circumstances or health, which might affect their role
- Discuss any concerns with the co-ordinator
- Volunteer driver's information, ensure that the vehicle insurer is informed of volunteer driving so that appropriate cover is in place and provide documentary evidence of this.

### **Recruitment and selection**

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruiting volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted to attract interest from different sectors of the community.

Positive action to target recruitment may be used where appropriate. Online application is encouraged but non-digital methods of application are also available.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including written role descriptions which set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required and benefits. A risk assessment will be undertaken on all volunteer roles and identified risks and steps to mitigate risks will be shared with the volunteer.

Recruitment will usually involve an informal interview, **Registration Form** and the taking of references; the process will be defined and consistent for any given role - for example, the recruitment process for trustees, regular volunteers and for volunteers for one off events will be tailored in each case and may differ from one another.

Where applicants are not able to be placed in their preferred role, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles, or signposted to the [Welcome - Volunteering Wales](#) website.

For roles which involve care giving and/or sustained and direct contact with young people or adults in a regulated service, volunteers will be required to have a full DBS disclosure check which will be arranged by the organisation. DBS disclosures are dealt with in the strictest confidence. A criminal record is not necessarily a bar to volunteering. The **DBS and Vetting Policy and Procedure**, covers this in more detail.

## **Induction and training**

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken. Generic **Volunteer Training** is required by all volunteers so that they understand the Bridges Charity, our procedures and how they can access support. This can be adapted depending on the needs of volunteers.

## **Support and supervision**

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate, and this is discussed during the **Volunteer Training**. Arrangements vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken, and may include telephone support, group meetings or one to one reviews. Levels of supervision vary according to the needs of the volunteer and the volunteer placement. It is recommended to 'check-in' with new volunteers at the start of their volunteer placement to ensure that it is working for them and to address any

concerns or issues, this can be done via email, phone call or face-to-face. The **Volunteer Supervision Record** provides a framework for these discussions and can be used at any time while a person is volunteering.

## **Recognition**

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation via staff and volunteer team meetings, planning events, focus groups and/or volunteering surveys. Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through annual reports, website articles, social media, and during Volunteers' Week award celebrations.

## **Dealing with problems**

The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly. We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. Where informal resolution is not possible, the organisations **Volunteer Complaints Policy** will be adhered to. Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the organisation.

## **Expenses**

Volunteers will be allowed to claim reasonable expenses to ensure that anybody who wants to volunteer can volunteer and that they are not out-of-pocket due to volunteering.

Car scheme drivers can redeem expenses using the Monthly Driver Expenses Claim Form, more information can be found in the Volunteer Driver Information.

People volunteering at other organisations will follow the expenses policy of that organisation.

## **Inclusive Volunteering**

We are committed to ensuring that anyone in our community can volunteer. We take a proactive approach to adapting our volunteer roles to meet the needs of both the

volunteer and the organisation in which they are volunteering. This is supported by the Volunteer Engagement Officer who supports volunteers with additional needs.

## **Moving on**

When volunteers move on from volunteering with us, they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an **Exit Questionnaire**. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully. Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 3 months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

## **Working with External Organisations**

We work alongside organisations in our local communities to support volunteers and to find the best opportunity to benefit the volunteer, the organisation and the community overall. We ensure that, working alongside organisations, that we provide safe, best practice recruitment. Further information can be found in our policy **Working with Organisations Policy**.

## **Documents**

- Volunteer Pack
- Volunteer Agreement (part of the Registration Form)
- Registration Form
- DBS Policy and Procedure
- Volunteer Training
- Volunteer Supervision Record
- Volunteer Complaints Policy
- Exit Questionnaire
- Working with Organisations Policy