

## VOLUNTEERS POLICY

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## VOLUNTEERS POLICY

### I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Support for Living (SFL) is a leading social care agency that provides supported housing, activity, respite and outreach services for adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs.
- 1.2 Support for Living recognises the valuable role that voluntary workers can have within an organisation, and believes that this relationship can be mutually beneficial.
- 1.3 Support for Living seeks to involve volunteers to:
- Support active citizenship that can create inclusive and active communities
  - Develop relationships between Support for Living and the local community
  - Provide links and contacts for service users with their local community
  - Promote relationships with service users based on shared interests and skills
  - Provide opportunities for people to make use of special interest and talents
  - Offer the chance to find out more about the work that may be being considered as a career
  - Provide valuable training and experience and develop skills in working with people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health needs which may help to secure paid employment.

### 2. WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

#### 2.1 Definition of a Volunteer

A 'Volunteer' is anyone who performs tasks or duties at the direction of and on behalf of SFL, without compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses incurred in the course of carrying out this task. A Volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by SFL prior to carrying out any tasks on behalf of SFL.

2.2 Volunteers will not be considered employees of SFL.

2.3 SFL intends that services provided by Volunteers should enhance and not replace services provided by paid staff. Volunteers will be recruited to perform tasks that match their original motivation to Volunteer and will not be allocated placements inappropriate to their skills, abilities and aptitude.

#### 2.4 Employee/Ex-Employees of Support for Living as Volunteers

SFL recognises the value of diverse experience within staff that are employed or have been employed by the SFL in the past. Existing and ex members of staff who wish to undertake a voluntary placement in a different area of the SFL, will be eligible to apply for a voluntary placement following the success or completion of their probation period. Staff who have been dismissed by SFL or who leave pending a disciplinary hearing/investigation will not be eligible to apply.

#### 2.5 Students on voluntary placements

SFL may offer voluntary placements to students as part of their nominated coursework and in negotiation with their particular college.

## 2.4 **Relatives as Volunteers**

Relatives of service users may be accepted as Volunteers, but will not be placed in a position where they will be working within the same service as a member of their family.

## 2.5 **Youth Volunteers (under the age of 18)**

There is specific legislation related to voluntary placements for people under the age of 18. In specially agreed circumstances where a voluntary placement is offered to someone under the age of 18, all relevant legislation will be complied with and parental consent applied.

## 2.7 **Other Volunteers**

Support for Living will also accept applications to Volunteer from other individuals subject to the recruitment procedures outlined in this policy.

## 3. **EXPENSES**

3.1 All Volunteers will have their travel and other subsequent payments, which are incurred in the course of carrying out their voluntary duties reimbursed.

3.2 Examples of the expenses that may be claimed are:

- Travel between home and the place of volunteering
- Travel undertaken in the course of volunteering
- Meals taken during the period of voluntary work
- Stationery and communication costs used for voluntary work
- The cost of any necessary health and safety measures.
- Other miscellaneous expenses, which should be agreed beforehand including estimated costs, nature of the expense, etc.

3.3 All reasonable expenses that you incur while volunteering with Support for Living will be reimbursed. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that costs are reasonable.

3.4 SFL reserve the right not to pay back your expenses where you have not complied with the Expenses Policy. Any breach of the Expenses Policy may result in the termination of the voluntary agreement.

## 4. **INSURANCE**

4.1 Volunteers are covered under SFL Insurance policy for personal accidents and contents insurance while carrying out their duties.

## 5. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

5.1 Support for Living recognises its responsibilities to provide a safe working environment for employees and volunteers. Your attention is drawn to your responsibility for taking responsible care of the health and safety of yourself and of others who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work, and for co-operating with Support for Living in order to assist the organisation in carrying out its duties with regard to health and safety at work. You shall not intentionally or recklessly interfere with, or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

- 5.2 SFL Health and Safety policies also apply to Volunteers who are advised to read them. All Volunteers will be trained in the SFL's Health and Safety policies and procedures at the time of induction and be expected to abide by them at all times.

## **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 6.1 All Volunteers will be expected to maintain confidentiality in all aspects of their work in accordance with SFL policies and procedures. Any breaches of confidentiality may lead to termination of the volunteer agreement by SFL.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

- 7.1 Support for Living values the diversity of the local community and wishes to see it reflected in the work of the organisation. We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. In keeping with this commitment, Support for Living recognises volunteering as being a right open to everybody and will ensure that no volunteer or potential volunteer receives less favourable treatment in accordance with policy.
- 7.2 Support for Living is committed to equal opportunities in employment and service delivery and all employees and volunteers are required to have an understanding and commitment to SFL's Equality and Diversity Policy.

## **8. DATA PROTECTION**

- 8.1 All Volunteers give their express consent to SFL processing information, including any sensitive personal data (as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998), including any relevant medical records, details of ethnic origin, subject to our undertaking that we will comply with our obligations under the 1998 Act.
- 8.2 This Volunteer Policy and Procedure is freely accessible to all. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis so that any adaptations and improvements can be made.

## VOLUNTEERS PROCEDURES

### 1. RECRUITMENT

- 1.1 SFL will use all appropriate means to recruit Volunteers including advertisement in the local area as well as through local Volunteer agencies. All recruitment will comply with SFL's Recruitment policy. SFL seeks to recruit Volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds that reflect the make up of the local community.
- 1.2 Requests will also be considered for volunteering internally or external to SFL.
- 1.3 An applicant will be required to fill in an application form (see Appendices I), support can be provided with this if required. The applicant will be interviewed and if successful, will be required to provide two references. These should preferably be from the most recent or current employers of the individual, whether in a voluntary capacity or from the individual's college in the case of students applying for a voluntary work placement.
- 1.4 All potential Volunteers must provide proof that they are entitled to work in the United Kingdom in accordance with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1996.
- 1.5 All appointments to a voluntary position must be subject to clearance by occupational health for the person's fitness to undertake the tasks described in their description of duties.
- 1.6 All potential Volunteers will be subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks (as per Support for Living's Disclosure Policy) and will be asked to declare any criminal convictions they may have in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 1.7 Volunteers who do not agree to these checks or the completion of these forms will be refused a voluntary placement with SFL.
- 1.8 A summary of this process can be seen in a flowchart (see Appendix C).

### 2. INDUCTION AND TRAINING

- 2.1 On successfully completing the recruitment procedure, an induction will be prepared and delivered by the Manager of the service/placement.
- 2.2 This will include:
  - The role of the Volunteer
  - A list of all staff members and Volunteers within the service
  - A list of the service line management structure and Senior Management Team
  - Copies of all the relevant policies including the Volunteer Policy, Confidentiality, Health and Safety and Diversity policies. The principles of these will be discussed between the Volunteer and the deputy/manager of the service.
  - Essential procedures i.e. fire procedures and health and safety procedures.
  - Induction and mandatory training, which may include fire safety, food hygiene, infection control, moving and handling, health and safety, protection of vulnerable adults and first aid training depending on what is appropriate for your placement
  - Information about the relevant code of practice

- Other service user information as appropriate to the Volunteer role agreement where appropriate
- 2.3 There will be a trial period of 12 weeks to give SFL and the Volunteer time to discover if they are suited to each other. A review will be made mid way through the trial period and also at the end. SFL may decide to extend the trial period if necessary and the Volunteer you will be informed of this.
- 2.4 Following successful completion of the trial period, the Volunteers progress will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis by the Manager of the service/placement.

### **3. SUPPORT**

- 3.1 The Human Resources Business Partners will be the central point of contact for all Volunteers.
- 3.2 All Volunteers will receive support and regular review meetings, with a Manager. This will include feedback on progress, discussion about personal/professional development and training updates.
- 3.3 A Volunteer may work unsupervised providing that they have had the relevant recruitment clearance and attended the mandatory training programme. Each arrangement will be different, the details of which will be discussed, agreed and planned with the manager of the service.

### **4. EXPENSES**

- 4.1 Reimbursement for reasonable expenses as detailed in the Volunteer Policy will be given, subject to the submission of receipts and a completed petty cash voucher to a manager within the service that you volunteer.

### **5. TERMINATION OF VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

- 5.1 Volunteers may terminate their Volunteer agreement at any time and cease carrying out voluntary duties for SFL. It is requested that Volunteers intending to cease carrying out voluntary duties within SFL provide advance notice of their departure, for example one month where possible.
- 5.2 SFL may terminate the Volunteer agreement of individual Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules of all procedures of the organisation or who fail to satisfactorily carry out their Volunteer duties. Possible grounds for the termination of a Volunteer's agreement may include, but are not limited to:
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst carrying out their duties;
  - Theft of property or misuse of the Organisation's equipment;
  - Abuse or mistreatment of service users, staff or others;
  - Failing to abide by the Organisation's policies and procedures.

### **6. RESOLVING PROBLEMS**

- 6.1 The relationship between SFL and its Volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that SFL is able to maintain its agreed standard of service to service users, it is also important that Volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service.
- 6.2 If your role as a Volunteer does not meet with SFL's standards, here is how it can be addressed:
- 6.3 Minor concerns will be discussed informally, through discussion between the Volunteer and the Manager in a normal supervision process. The aim of such discussions would be to assist the Volunteer in meeting the standards required and the Manager will be expected to clearly set out those standards, by either recording it on the supervision record or by letter. The Volunteer will be advised in such cases that if improvement is not forthcoming the next step will be a formal meeting.
- 6.4 In instances where such an approach has failed to achieve the necessary improvement or where the concern is considered serious the following stage will be used.
  - The Manager will put all concerns in writing
  - The Volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Manager, the Manager's line manager and Human Resources.
  - The outcome of the decision will be confirmed in writing.
- 6.5 At all times the Volunteer will be able to fully state their case.