

BURY ST EDMUNDS VOLUNTEER CENTRE

VOLUNTEER POLICY

(Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre has achieved "Investors in Volunteers" accreditation)

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is a valuable resource enhancing the quality and range of support and help available to people in a wide variety of settings. The scale of this resource is enormous and thousands of hours are given each year to people in Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area of the town. Volunteers provide services to many people but do not replace paid staff. They bring a wide diversity of skills and experience to the work and can make a major contribution to the breaking down of barriers, reducing stigma and reducing social exclusions and isolation.

Volunteers make a real difference and give people who they help much to look forward to socially as well as enabling them to maintain independence. The contribution of volunteers to community and civil life is immense and invaluable. Many services would not be able to be provided without the time freely given by volunteers.

Volunteers are at the heart of our structure. The contribution of volunteers to the work of Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre is especially valued and respected.

Volunteers increase our capacity to fulfil our mission statement and deliver on our objectives. They keep the organisation in touch with our purpose and provide a wide range of relevant skills and perspectives that improve the work we do.

This policy, which is supported by our volunteers, sets out how Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre intends to support its volunteers.

TYPES OF VOLUNTEER

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre recognises three different types of volunteers.

Occasional Volunteers

These are people who volunteer at events such as 'Make a Difference Day' or help with projects, for example by helping with 'Buddy Day.' They volunteer occasionally, perhaps a few times a year.

Regular Volunteers

These are people who take on a particular task, on an ongoing basis. Regular volunteers include those undertaking administrative work, driving a minibus, passenger assistant and befriending.

Trustees

These people hold positions of responsibility and have been selected on the basis of their skills and experience.

PRINCIPLES

The volunteer policy is guided by the following principles:

- The organisation and its volunteers will follow this policy.
- All volunteers, Trustees will sign the volunteer agreement.
- The organisation recognises that volunteers donate their time. Their contribution should be mutually agreed.
- The volunteer's role will be clearly explained and mutually agreed.
- The organisation will provide induction, information, training and support to its volunteers appropriate to their volunteer role.
- The organisation will, whenever possible, give volunteers work that is satisfying and appropriate to their interest.
- Volunteers have the right to express their views within the organisational structure.
- Volunteers and staff will work together within the organisation's rules, policies and procedures.
- Volunteers and staff will treat each other with respect and courtesy.
- The organisation is committed to equal opportunities in relation to the recruitment, selection and involvement of volunteers.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre is committed to good practice when supporting its volunteers. For more detailed information on how the organisation supports volunteers, see the Volunteer Induction Pack.

Recruitment

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre will make ongoing efforts to recruit volunteers who match appropriate needs. This selection process will be based on the skills and interest of the volunteer and the current needs of the organisation.

Volunteer agreement and work outline

All volunteers and trustees will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement outlining the commitment and expectations of Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre and the role or specific tasks that the volunteer has offered to undertake. A representative of Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre will also sign this agreement. The agreement is by no means a contract; it is simply a guideline to help the volunteer feel supported and clearer about their responsibilities. Volunteers will also receive a copy of the Volunteer Induction Pack to keep and refer to when necessary.

Induction, information and training

Volunteers will receive an appropriate induction, which will include information on the aims, background and organisational framework of the organisation. Additional information will be provided to help the volunteer in their work. Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre will strive to make the information sessions accessible and relevant to local needs. Opportunities to develop knowledge and skills will also be provided as appropriate.

Support and Supervision

Volunteers will be supported and supervised by a named contact person. This person will provide the volunteer with feedback on their work, the opportunity to discuss future work and a chance to discuss any issues that may arise.

Health and Safety

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre will, as far as is practical, care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with copies of relevant health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training.

Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed travel and other approved expenses when allowed by Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre's Expenses Policy. To claim expenses, supporting receipts must be provided.

Having a voice

Volunteers will be given opportunities to express their views about issues concerning the organisation and its work. Volunteers can also give feedback through the appointed supervisor.

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the organisation's insurance policy while engaged in approved work for Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre.

Equal opportunities

All volunteers are required to make a commitment to equal opportunities. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre's equal opportunities policy and will be supported in its practice.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and follow its principles.

Volunteers will have access to personal information about some individuals. Some volunteers will also hold information about, for example, financial and personnel matters. The organisation needs to be able to trust its volunteers with such information, which is confidential. However, volunteers suspecting mistreatment or abuse of a volunteer, staff member or a person for whom they may be undertaking a volunteering role, should discuss the matter with their supervisor. This person will make an informed decision on what needs to be done.

Resolving concerns

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre aims to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage. A Complaints Procedure has been drawn up for dealing with complaints by volunteers. Where the actions of a volunteer warrant serious concern the Disciplinary Procedure may be used and appropriate action taken. Copies of these procedures can be found in the Volunteer Induction Pack.