

Haverhill Volunteer Centre

VOLUNTEER POLICY

(Haverhill Volunteer Centre has achieved “Investors in Volunteers” accreditation)

Introduction

Haverhill Volunteer Centre (HVC) is a local voluntary organisation that exists to promote and support volunteering in Haverhill and the surrounding areas since 1988.

HVC actively recruits potential volunteers, from all sections of the community, and places them with local voluntary organisations or private individuals who are seeking volunteers for support.

We firmly believe that Volunteers offer a valuable contribution to our organisation. We want to recognise this commitment by setting out this policy, to encourage and support volunteers and also to give an idea of the kinds of areas of our service with which we need your help.

In line with our mission and our core values, HVC seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure that our services meet the needs of our service users
- provide new skills and perspectives
- increase our contact with the local community we serve

Principles

This Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- HVC will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to actively contribute to the organisations aims.
- HVC does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- HVC expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- HVC recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.

Recruitment of Volunteers

HVC will not recruit volunteers to replace paid staff. In general, we will recruit volunteers for specific tasks or projects to compliment the work paid staff does.

- All Volunteers must complete registration forms, provide references and attend an interview. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks will be essential for certain volunteering roles or are conducted where applicable.
- HVC will treat all information collected in this process with strict confidentiality and any details will be made accessible to the volunteer on written request.
- All volunteers receive an induction and organisations using volunteers are encouraged to implement Good Practice.
- During induction volunteers will be provided with written information, organisational policies and procedures and will be encouraged to discuss any of the issues arising.
- Volunteers will not be used in time of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular tasks, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.
- All prospective volunteers will have the opportunity to meet a designated member of staff who will enquire about what they would like to do, their particular skills, suitability and how best their potential as a volunteer might be realised.

- All staff within the organisation is committed to identifying opportunities for volunteers where practicable. HVC will have an identified staff member who will provide support to volunteers and help settle them into their chosen activity and continue to do so if or where needed.

Equal Opportunities & Diversity

HVC operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of paid staff and this will be applied to volunteers.

We want to encourage interest in registering as a volunteer with HVC from all sectors of the community without favour or discrimination in respect of nationality, race, marital status, religious beliefs, gender or political beliefs.

Our aim, throughout this policy is to ensure that volunteers are treated in a fair and consistent way.

Finding a placement

We will try to find appropriate tasks or activities for all volunteers who apply, although this will depend upon local needs.

Whilst not intending to be an exhaustive list, activities undertaken by a volunteer for HVC can include: reading to individuals or groups, befriending, leading discussion groups, reminiscence, driving, serving in an on-site shop, accompanying elderly or disabled residents on shopping trips, visits to hospital and involvement in social activities and events and much, much more.

Commitment

HVC recognises that volunteers will often need flexible arrangements regarding the amount of time and level of commitment they are able to give. We will try to work within these constraints. Whatever the level of commitment a volunteer is able to give; we will recognise and value their contribution. In return the volunteer will be expected to follow to the letter and spirit HVC's policies and procedures and to meet mutually agreed time commitments, or to give notice if this is not possible.

Volunteers are free to leave their voluntary role at any time.

We will always try to match what a volunteer feels able to take on with our service users' needs and our organisational needs.

Enquiries from people who want to volunteer

The HVC will act as the first point of contact for enquiries and will advise the potential volunteer in what is available and what might be expected of the volunteer.

Volunteer Guidelines

Volunteers will be asked to sign a copy of the Volunteer registration form which acts as a safeguard both for the volunteer and for HVC. As volunteers represent a valuable resource of the organisation, we should agree the importance of being courteous and helpful and acknowledge the importance of providing a good quality service to HVC service users. Equally, we need to provide a warm welcome to volunteers, give adequate support and ensure that the volunteers' learning needs are met when they join us.

The Volunteer registration form will indicate approximately how much time a volunteer is happy to give and what activities they are likely to be involved in. The agreement is not to be seen as a contract. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created, either now or at any time in the future.

Induction and training

When registering with HVC, volunteers may wish to learn more about the organisation, what we are trying to achieve and how we work.

Volunteers may also need to understand the tasks or projects in which they will be involved, some of which may need some particular skills. Much of such consideration will take place within the setting in which they will be helping.

- The volunteer will be offered a generic role description.

- The volunteer will be encouraged to attend a 'Taster session' or a meeting to find out first hand what might be expected of him/her. Either side is free to discontinue the placement at any time.
- HVC will nominate someone to act as their main point of contact who will help settle the volunteer into the group and provide support where needed.
- The volunteer will be encouraged to attend relevant training.
- Reimbursement of costs arising from training should be discussed before attendance.

Support

All volunteers will have a named person as their main point of contact who will provide regular informal contact – to feed back on progress, discuss future tasks and development and air any problems.

HVC aims to support volunteers by giving them the information they need about:

- What HVC is trying to achieve
- the way we work with volunteers
- safety in their voluntary placement any learning needs of the volunteer
- policies in place
- the guidance and support we provide
- how volunteers can raise matters about which they are concerned
- how we deal with complaints from or about a volunteer
- the systems we use, for example on how we reimburse expenses

Expenses

Reimbursement of expenses needs to be discussed before taking on a volunteering role.

The volunteer's voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning HVC and its work. The first contact for these views is their nominated staff member or the Centre Manager.

Grievances

If a volunteer has a grievance, we will endeavour to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. The volunteer should speak to their line manager about their concerns. We will aim to respond speedily. We would adopt the same approach if a complaint is received about a volunteer.

If it becomes apparent that the relationship between HVC and a volunteer is not working out, it may be necessary to end the arrangement without notice.

Insurance

All volunteers will be covered by HVC Employers' Liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on HVC behalf.

Health and safety

Volunteers are covered by HVC Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which will be provided for each volunteer.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.

But most of all Haverhill Volunteer Centre's aim is to provide a variety of opportunities, for all levels of ability that will promote a fair, safe, enjoyable and empowering experience for everyone involved in volunteering.