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Community
Legal Service



Help Point



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**“Working to Empower the Community”
in Lancashire and Cumbria**

Pamela Beswick - Chief Executive Officer

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

POLICY

Signposts is committed to work with adults, children and young people – this ensures we value, encourage and celebrate volunteering in our own projects.

As such, it is essential we ensure fairness and consistency whilst working with a diverse range of people. By committing to a policy, volunteers will not be subject to ad hoc decisions and thus will be treated with due respect and equality which links to our Policy on Equality and Diversity.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Signposts offers a range of volunteering opportunities (see Volunteer Opportunities Table available at www.signposts.org.uk). There should also be the chance to recruit volunteers for fixed term and focused projects.

Supporting volunteers takes paid staff time and resources to do well so all volunteer placements should be analysed and approved by a Team Leader or Manager. Volunteers should be recruited formally to ensure that they and the opportunity match up as well as giving more value to the role.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Signposts advertises volunteering opportunities locally and we encourage the team to make people aware that we work with volunteers on a more constant and flexible basis.

Staff should consider how the opportunities are promoted and advertised - can you be more inclusive, what are the barriers to volunteering and what can you do to reduce them.

Role descriptions (see Volunteer Opportunities Table) have been created for volunteer posts and the application process should seek to establish whether someone is able to fulfil the role.

Each volunteer should go through an application process for a placement and this process is outlined in full in the Safer Recruitment and Selection policy and procedures.

Charity Registration Number: 1117645

Member of AdviceUK (previously FIAC)

Company Limited by Guarantee: 5990592

Registered in England and Wales



North Lancashire
Teaching Primary Care Trust



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Additional major funding from Preston City Council, the FC Scott Charitable Trust and Tudor Trust

Each volunteer should have an interview. This will:

- Provide information that will enable them to decide whether or not to continue with the recruitment process.
- Provide an opportunity for Signposts to decide on the suitability of the volunteer for placement.

The way in which the interview is conducted should aim to make the potential volunteer feel relaxed and comfortable.

An interview should aim to cover (at a level that is appropriate):

- Confidentiality requirements.
- Awareness of grievance complaint and disciplinary procedures.
- Health and safety requirements.
- Equality and Diversity matters.
- An outline of the induction process.
- Support offered by Signposts including training and mentoring.

This will be followed up in more detail at induction.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Volunteers should not be discriminated against on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, age, creed, race, disability or potential affiliation in line with Signposts's Equality and Diversity policy.

VOLUNTEERS AND BENEFITS

Volunteers who receive benefits should be advised to contact their relevant office before beginning to volunteer. Job Seekers Allowance claimants are allowed to volunteer as long as they remain available for paid work and continue to actively seek work. Volunteers receiving income support can volunteer for as many hours as they like as voluntary work is exempt.

Any volunteer receiving incapacity benefits should be given help and support regarding control measures that have arisen from the risk assessments linked to their condition in order for them to succeed in their voluntary role.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Although a volunteer has rights with Signposts, and in turn is expected to operate within all Signposts policies and procedures, they are able to terminate their role much more easily than an employee. As such, good practice denotes the use of the term 'agreement' as opposed to 'contract' as the agreement is not legally binding.

However this should not mean that either party takes the agreement any less seriously when it comes to terms and conditions or expectations.

Signposts will also use the term supervisor or mentor rather than line manager and will be very clear about the re-imbursment of expenses – this should not be mistaken for payment.

EXPENSES

These should be 'reasonable' and may be claimed by volunteers for travel, refreshments where a full days volunteering is undertaken and any other out of pocket costs they incurred linked to their role.

Expenses should be agreed in advance and approved by the team leader in line with budgets.

All expenses should be accounted for via receipts and be claimed in the standard way for Signposts.

SIGNPOSTS'S COMMITMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO VOLUNTEERS

All Signposts volunteers should undertake an Induction Programme (on website) covering:

- Volunteer Handbook that includes the nature and details of the task/role (guidance on volunteer roles can be found on the Signposts website, www.signposts.org.uk "Volunteer with Us"), operational remit, level of responsibility and time commitment required.
- The Signposts Website (as above) and relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that each volunteer has a designated supervisor or mentor and regular supervision meetings.
- Re-imburement of out of pocket expenses.
- How they are covered in terms of insurance and their rights in terms of Health and Safety and Data Protection.
- Ensuring a personal details form with relevant emergency contact details and health information is on file

Ensure they are aware of their rights and who to go to for support and advice if their supervisor is unavailable or not providing them with the correct level of support.

- Volunteers should be invited to participate in team meetings/training opportunities as appropriate.
- If they have other daytime commitments a flexible way of working should be sought so that their contribution is valued and they can attend team events.
- Volunteers should have regular meetings where their performance is discussed as well as opportunities for their development. They will not be working for financial remuneration and may have other motivations which should be identified and supported.

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Youth work has a culture of young people in transition from being group members to leaders. Signposts has differing 'young leader' roles for young volunteers – this is project specific.

Parental consent must be sought for any volunteer under 18 and all other good practice regarding the support and management of volunteers should still apply.

In supporting volunteers under 18, Signposts is bound by a higher Duty of Care (the same as when delivering services to young people) and appropriate levels of supervision and support must be in place. This also includes increased levels of health and safety requirements within the workplace. This would also apply if a volunteer is pregnant.

Signposts young volunteers should not be put in a position of responsibility over other young people of a similar age/level of development without serious consideration and support measures must be included on the project risk assessment.

However, the concept of young leaders/volunteers emerging to lead peers is one that should be supported and celebrated. It is best if:-

- It is actually part of your youth work programme – therefore covered by insurance, health and safety and staffing ratios.
- It can be individually tailored to the needs of the young person and accredited.

FORMS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION (on website)

- Volunteer Application Form
- Volunteer Opportunities Table
- Individual Volunteers linked to the Volunteer Opportunities Table.
- Confidential Reference Request Form
- Volunteer Handbook (in preparation)
- Volunteer Induction Programme

National Volunteers Week: runs from the 1-7 June every year – you can find more information on www.volunteersweek.org.uk

Chief Executive
December 2009
Amended April 2010