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

Pamela Beswick - Chief Executive Officer

*Community
Legal Service*



Help Point

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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SECTION 1 WELCOME TO SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you as a volunteer to SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED. SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED is a diverse and developing organisation which prides itself on the quality of its services and its ability to meet the changing needs of demanding client groups.

SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED is a Charity focusing on the causes and consequences of deprivation and exclusion formed in 1994. SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED has been committed to innovative ways of working with disadvantaged individuals and groups. This has drawn the organisation into a wide range of initiatives encompassing unemployment, homelessness, offending and anti-social behaviour, young people in and leaving care, community safety and regeneration, drug abuse and disability.

Success can only be achieved with a committed, professional workforce who strive to work together to achieve the highest standards. I therefore commend this volunteer handbook to you as part of our commitment to providing all of us within SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED with a clear framework within which we must work.

This handbook has been designed for SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED Volunteers and provides information about the organisation as well as setting out the policy framework within which SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED and all of our staff are expected to operate.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to be aware of our policies and practices and operate within them. You should familiarise yourself with the contents of the handbook as well as using it as a source of reference.

For more information visit the Signposts Website www.signposts.org.uk

SECTION 2 THE ROLE OF THE VOUNTEER

Please read this handbook carefully before starting your volunteer placement, it will give:-

- ❖ Information about volunteering with SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED
- ❖ Information which will give structure to your volunteering

SO WHO CAN BE A VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are people who give freely their time, abilities, skills and enthusiasm, without payment, in order to contribute something to and benefit their community.

SO WHAT DO I GET IN RETURN?

There are many benefits from volunteering, these include:-

- ❖ Learning New Skills
- ❖ Gaining Work Experience
- ❖ Building your confidence and self esteem
- ❖ Meeting new people or trying something new
- ❖ Developing a skill, hobby or interest
- ❖ Making a difference to your own life and the lives of others

A volunteer is a person who, **FREE OF CHARGE** and **WITHOUT DURESS**, **CONTRIBUTES THEIR TIME AND SKILLS** with the aim of **BENEFITING** others in their **COMMUNITY**.

As a volunteer with Signposts (MARC) Ltd you can expect:-

- ❖ To be treated with respect and courtesy
- ❖ To be treated fairly regardless of religion, disability (physical or mental), race, colour, ethnic or national origins, age, parental or marital status, gender, sexual orientation, and/or socio-economic background.
- ❖ A supportive and positive environment that ensures you enjoy your volunteering
- ❖ An induction and opportunities to undertake training
- ❖ A named contact for support/supervision. The named person should be approachable and willing to talk through any problems or worries that the volunteer may have
- ❖ Relevant up-to-date information and advice
- ❖ Recognition and thanks
- ❖ Equal opportunities
- ❖ Re-imbusement of any out of pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering
- ❖ Adequate Public Liability Insurance
- ❖ Respect to your right to privacy and that of your contacts
- ❖ Not to be asked to cover work that is normally or has previously been done by paid workers
- ❖ To be allowed time off for holidays and emergencies
- ❖ The right to know why they were not acceptable for voluntary work, (if this matter arises)

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY VOLUNTEERING

SECTION 3 GENERAL INFORMATION

EXPENSES

As a volunteer you should not be out of pocket as a result of giving your time and skills for free.

What expenses might you be able to claim for?

- ❖ Travel to and from the place of volunteering
- ❖ Travel during your volunteering
- ❖ Child Care

You need to keep a record of your bus fares and tickets and or taxi invoices, to enable you to claim for your expenses.

GIFTS AND PERSONAL REIMBURSEMENTS

Gifts of cash or of an expensive nature from anyone should be brought to the attention of the Project Supervisor.

WELFARE BENEFITS

Although volunteering should not affect your benefits you should inform your local Job Centre/ Benefits Agency before you begin your volunteering.

If you are claiming Job Seekers Allowance you can volunteer for as many hours as you and the organisation feel is appropriate. You may claim out of pocket expenses incurred through the voluntary work such as travel fares, however, you must continue to seek paid employment and be able to give up your volunteering within 48 hours, either to attend an interview or take up work.

If you are claiming an “unfit for work” benefit such as Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance the nature of the volunteering should not conflict with that nature of your claim. You can also volunteer for as many hours as you feel appropriate, but do not over commit yourself.

TRAINING

As well as ongoing support volunteers may also be given the opportunity to take part in appropriate training.

Training can give you the skills to undertake your role as a volunteer safely and well. It can also help to give a better understanding of an organisation and how you fit into it.

The training you may be able to take part in will vary depending on your role and the training opportunities available at the time of your volunteering activity.

CRIMINAL RECORD BUREAU (CRB) CHECK

All volunteers at Signposts have substantial unsupervised access to children and vulnerable adults and SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED will, therefore, carry out a police check.

However, they must ask for permission before they do this and request you to sign a form. (Always read through any documentation that you are requested to sign).

Any information received will be treated in the strictest confidence.

SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED will ask volunteers about any criminal convictions they might have. The fact that a person has a criminal record does not automatically make them unsuitable for voluntary work and SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED will take the following into consideration:-

- ❖ The nature of the work of their project
- ❖ The role the volunteer will be undertaking
- ❖ The nature of the offence
- ❖ How long ago it was committed
- ❖ The frequency of the offence and whether there is a pattern

- This will be repeated at 12 monthly intervals

During your involvement with Signposts you are required to immediately report to the organisation any convictions or offences with which you are charged, including traffic offences.

PROBLEMS

a. Termination of Service

- ❖ Volunteers are asked to give as much notice as possible before leaving the project so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- ❖ The project reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to ask a volunteer to withdraw from the project.

b. Emergency Procedure

In an emergency or if you are involved in an accident whilst volunteering, please inform your supervisor. Remember all accidents/incidents should be recorded no matter how trivial they may seem at the time. If an accident happens seek the help of your supervisor immediately.

c. Health and Safety

SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED regards the promotion of Health and Safety at its locations as being of the highest priority in order to meet its responsibilities under the Health and

Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and also to ensure that staff and volunteers fully appreciate the duties and responsibilities required of them.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- ❖ Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work;
- ❖ Co-operate with their employer so far as is reasonably necessary to enable the employer to comply with his duties under the Act;
- ❖ No person shall intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare.

Each member of staff and volunteer has a duty to report any hazard or potential hazard to their supervisor.

SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED will undertake risk assessments and will take steps to avoid or reduce such hazards. All accidents must be reported to SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED and the appropriate accident form completed.

All SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED premises hold a copy of the current Health and Safety Policy, which is available to all staff and volunteers.

All volunteers will receive an appropriate first day health and safety induction, together with on-going training as applicable.

d. Complaints

As a volunteer you have a right to complain about anything that concerns you. It is better to do this than keep a problem to yourself or bare any grudges.

Wherever possible try to resolve any complaints with your supervisor. If this proves unsuccessful you may need to take other steps and you should follow the organisations complaints procedure.

The complaints procedure is a way of protecting both volunteers and the organisations and allows the problem to be looked at fairly. SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED operates a complaints procedure. A copy of the Complaints Policy is on the website and displayed in all Signposts venues.

e. Confidentiality

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

Details regarding volunteers' names, addresses, contact details, record of volunteering activity, training and development will be collated by SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED for use only in connection with volunteering undertaken.

f. Accountability

Volunteers have a responsibility to all other staff, service users and volunteers working with SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED.

g. The Volunteers' Voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation.

h. Insurance

All volunteers are covered by SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED's public liability insurance whilst they are on the premises or engaged in agreed work on SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED's behalf.

VOLUNTEER CONTACTS

Supervisor:

Address:
.....
.....
.....

Telephone Number:

Email

If you feel unable to speak to any of the above named persons contact

01524 419021 (Main Office) or

This is also the SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED Emergency Contact Number for reporting all accidents/incidents out of normal office hours.

SECTION 4 SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Each volunteer will agree a Volunteer Agreement establishing what SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED undertakes to provide him or her. In addition, they will agree a written outline of the specific work they will be undertaking. These should be made clear from the outset and these may be redefined as volunteers gain more experience. This should be done in consultation with staff within the project.

Volunteers Agreement

As a volunteer you must complete a Volunteer Agreement. This is a means through which you make your commitment to complete the activities that lead to your personal development.

Support

Support and supervision provides you with the opportunity to provide Signposts MARC Limited any concerns, gain feedback on your work and talk about your own development.

SECTION 5 VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONCLUSION

When you begin volunteering you have certain responsibilities to SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED. They expect you to:-

- ❖ Be reliable and punctual, if you are unable to fulfil your commitment, please give as much notice as possible
- ❖ Respect the rights of any people (Staff, Volunteers, and Clients) you are in contact with, and treat each with Respect, Courtesy, and Equality
- ❖ Ask for support when and where you need it
- ❖ Support our aims and objectives
- ❖ To work reliably and to the best of your ability
- ❖ Exchange information and feedback to appropriate staff members
- ❖ Be open to change
- ❖ Follow the organisations policies e.g. health and safety, equal opportunities etc.
- ❖ Respect anything told to you in confidence either about SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED or a client.

You must NOT disclose it to anyone else without permission

If you have had information disclosed to you which you feel someone else should know about speak to your supervisor.

Sickness/Lateness

Always make sure you explain yourself to the relevant person if you are late or absent because of sickness or travel problems. If you do need to be absent, try to ring as soon as possible and also warn your project co-ordinator that you will not be able to attend.

Volunteer Agreement

An agreement between
SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED
and _____

Brief description of
role

Name of Supervisor: _____

Name of Senior Manger: _____

Induction and Training Plan

Time Frame: _____

Details of Support/Supervision:

_____ agrees to be a Volunteer at SIGNPOSTS
MARC LIMITED in accordance

with the above role. SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED agrees that volunteers are free to
leave at any time, but would appreciate at least 48 hours notice.

Signature: _____ (Volunteer) Date: _____

Signature: _____ (For SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED) Date: _____

**This agreement is not intended as a contract of employment. It can be
cancelled at any time by either party.**

RISK ASSESSMENT OF THE VOLUNTEER ROLE:-

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONCLUSION

Each volunteers role should be risk assessed generically. It is prudent at induction to explain to volunteers their responsibilities under the Health and Safety Policy, and that Safety for themselves and others is a priority matter.

Conclusion

Spread the word about SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED, remember any one can be involved.

Please give the project the commitment it deserves remember you are benefiting both yourself and the local community.

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY VOLUNTEERING!

Data Protection Act 1998

The information supplied on this form may be held on computer and/or manual files. All the information supplied by you is strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of SIGNPOSTS MARC LIMITED Ltd.