

## Volunteer Policy

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust recognises that volunteering has the potential to bring a range of benefits – for individuals, for the Trust, and for the wider community. Volunteering is one way the Trust hopes to engage with members of the Trust and the general public and can act as a driver to bring communities together and build social cohesion. Volunteering in the Trust can also be a powerful way of addressing the stigma of any long-term health condition and bring awareness, acceptance and understanding of mental health conditions to volunteers and in extension to the wider general public. Volunteer interaction with service users can also be an important step in a service user's emotionally wellbeing journey.
- 1.2 East London NHS Foundation Trust values the role of volunteers and recognises the importance of the contribution which they make to the organisation and its services. This policy sets out a standardised approach to the recruitment and support of volunteers within the Trust. It is based on evidence from good practice and directed towards ensuring that the mandatory requirements of the Trust are met.

## 2.0 Definitions of a volunteer

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy, the Trust uses a definition of volunteering taken from former Volunteering England's "The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering" (2005). It states that volunteering is "...an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than, or in addition to, close relatives".
- 2.2 The emphasis is on the fact that volunteering opportunities are:-
  - of a voluntary nature
  - a matter of personal choice
  - unpaidFrom the organisations perspective, volunteers can enhance the work of the Trust, **but they cannot replace paid workers.**
- 2.3 Volunteers will gain valuable skills and experience whilst volunteering and these may be important motivations. Volunteering may also help with future employability and may also be a key focus for participation. As stated above, volunteers receive no payment; they are reimbursed any reasonable and pre agreed out of pocket expenses that they incur during their volunteering only.
- 2.4 Therefore, it follows that those who are not volunteers and hence are not guided by this policy are:-
  - student placements (students who attend as part of their studies with **linked** universities working in partnership with the Trust)
  - work placements (those who are unemployed and attending as part of their skill building and provided via **linked** employment supporting agencies working in partnership with the Trust)
  - staff seconded placements – staff who are employed with another NHS provider who are released to spend an agreed time gaining career development within the Trust

- experts by experience – service users who use their experience to assist on consultations, interview panels for the Trust, carrying out surveys and audits
- permitted and supported permitted work – who receive money and support in line with allowances in line with benefits received
- this Volunteer Policy does not cover governor activity

### **3.0 Who can volunteer?**

3.1 Anyone from the community can volunteer if they are over the age of 16 and do not fall into the categories in 2.4 above and who successfully complete the selection process and the relevant DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. Service users, their carers as well as interested members of the public are welcomed and encouraged to bring their skills and life experiences. Trust staff are invited to volunteer should they wish to develop their skills having discussed this with their line manager.

There are however some restrictions on who can volunteer that do not apply to everyone in that category.

3.2 Volunteers from Overseas – There are rules for potential volunteers from outside of the European Union or EEA (European Economic Area) are advised to check with the UK Border Agency if they are unsure if this is allowed on their visa. There are a number of visas or types of entry clearance conditions and potential volunteers will need to check if they are permitted to volunteer in addition to their main purpose for entering the country. Volunteers who have refugee status or who have exceptional leave to remain are permitted to volunteer. There are issues for people who wish to volunteer if there are restrictions on their visa such as “No re-course to public funds” – as the training and experience that is given via the NHS constitutes funding in kind in the eyes of the UK Border Agency. Asylum seekers are permitted to volunteer in certain types of organisations and this needs to be checked with the relevant authority.

3.3 Current Service Users – although encouraged to apply to undertake a volunteering opportunity service users will not be placed to volunteer within a department who are currently providing a service to them. This is to avoid blurring roles that may cause difficulty in the responsibility of exercising our duty of care when an individual is acting in two different capacities in the same setting. This is also to overcome boundary issues with regard to other service users they may then encounter whilst volunteering who may have been receiving services alongside the volunteer. In some cases service users can volunteer within a service that they have received support from in the past, however, it is advised that there is at least a 3 month gap between leaving the support of that service and volunteering. In the interest of the volunteer this must be discussed with the Trust Volunteer Lead before final agreement can be given.

### **4.0 Creating Volunteer Opportunities and Support Structures**

#### **4.1 Development of Volunteer Roles**

The **Trust Volunteer Lead** will liaise with departments across the Trust to identify and develop roles that are suitable for volunteers. A clear **Role**

**Description** will be agreed between the department and the Trust Volunteer Lead. This description must ensure that:

- The role is appropriate for a volunteer.
- The role does not replace a paid post.
- The role complies with legislation and good practice guidance for involving volunteers.

All Role Descriptions will be entered onto the **Trust Volunteer Role Database** and advertised on the Trust volunteer website.

#### **4.2 Recruitment Process**

All volunteer applications, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and initial informal interviews will be undertaken by the **Trust Volunteer Lead**. Once this process is completed, the volunteer will be introduced to the department responsible for hosting them on site.

#### **4.3 Role of the Volunteer Supervisor**

Within each department, a designated staff member will act as the **Volunteer Supervisor**. They will take day-to-day responsibility for managing, guiding, and supporting the volunteer. The Trust Volunteer Lead will provide training for Volunteer Supervisors to ensure they are confident in this role.

#### **4.4 Ongoing Support for Supervisors and Volunteers**

**The Trust Volunteer Lead** will:

- Organise regular online meetings with Volunteer Supervisors to ensure they feel supported and able to raise any issues.
- Arrange quarterly volunteer meet-ups to provide opportunities for volunteers to connect with one another, build social relationships, and access peer support outside of staff supervision.
- Support volunteers directly with personal development, training, and any issues regarding their placement.
- Provide the compulsory training required for all volunteers.
- Offer ongoing advice and support to Volunteer Supervisors in their day-to-day management of volunteers.

### **5.0 The benefits of volunteer participation in the Trust**

5.1 Volunteers bring with them positive qualities such as commitment, skills, interest, energy and enthusiasm and they can enhance the Trust's work in a variety of ways. At a service delivery level, they can add value to statutory services by providing practical support to service users, helping to overcome social isolation and facilitating participation in their local community. Volunteers also bring their own life experiences and can bring into light coping mechanisms/strategies which maybe unconventional but therapeutic.

They also introduce a different perspective from the wider section of the community which may include different values, attitudes and motivators. Through training, building knowledge from their volunteering experiences they will be able to raise mental health awareness to others within their community, thereby breaking down barriers, reducing stigma and discrimination.

- 5.2 As a Foundation Trust, volunteering affords important opportunities for community involvement at different levels and in different capacities within the organisation.
- 5.3.1 Volunteers benefit from their involvement in a number of ways. There are many reasons that people give up their spare time for volunteering. For some, volunteering can be a route to employment, or a chance to try something new which may lead to a career change. From this perspective, volunteering can be a way of:
  - Gaining new skills, knowledge and experience
    - Developing existing skills and knowledge
    - Enhancing a CV
    - Improving one's employment prospects
    - Gaining an accreditation
    - Using one's professional skills and knowledge to benefit others (usually described as pro bono)
- 5.4 For others, volunteering appeals because of its social benefits. These include:
  - Meeting new people
  - Making new friends
  - A chance to socialise
  - Getting to know the local community

In addition, many people volunteer for a variety of other reasons, such as:

- Giving something back to an organisation that has impacted on a person's life, either directly or indirectly
- A desire to make a difference to the lives of others
- Feeling part of a team
- Feeling valued
- Having quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle
- Building up trust
- Gaining confidence and self-esteem

## **6.0 Volunteer Recruitment**

- 6.1 It is important that volunteers are recruited following an equal opportunities process and the Trust will encourage the diversity of the volunteers by positive advertising and meeting a range of groups to encourage participation. The Trust will aim to ensure that its' Equality Diversity and Human Rights Policy is followed during the recruitment of volunteers. The Trust will promote and ensure the involvement of the following groups as volunteers. The

demographic data of volunteers will be reported to the Workforce Committee.

These include:

- All ethnic minority groups
- Women and Men
- Older people
- Young people over the age of 16 years
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people
- Disabled people
- People who follow a particular religion

- 6.2 Volunteering within the Trust must not be 'prescribed' to service users as part of their care plan. It can be suggested to service users but ultimately it must be an activity that is freely undertaken. Service user volunteers will be supported and reasonable adjustments made with the agreement of the department and Volunteer Lead.
- 6.3 The volunteer has the choice and the freedom to cease volunteering at any time giving as much notice as possible.
- 6.4 Entry into the recruitment process can be in two ways. The first, and preferred entry process, is via the Trust Volunteer Lead by email, telephone or face to face. The Trust website will have details of the volunteering programme and contact points but we do also recognise that volunteers sometimes approach specific departments.
- 6.5 Entry points for volunteer recruitment via particular departments who are approached by the potential volunteer (a) because they have a particular interest in that sphere of work or (b) because they know someone who is involved either as a staff member or service user are also accepted. Staff members in the department concerned should explain the volunteering role if there is one already in existence, but then refer the person to the Trust Volunteer Lead to ensure all the correct recruitment processes are followed and to ensure that the details are recorded by the Trust Volunteer Lead on the Trust Volunteer Database to ensure all good practice steps are followed.
- 6.6 The starting point for recruitment will be the new Volunteer webpage. On this site, all volunteer opportunity will be advertised and process explained. The website will have some basic information about the Trust, information about the volunteer programme within the Trust, the recruitment and training process and an application and training booking portal.
- 6.7 Upon receipt of the application form a discussion will be held between the Trust Volunteer Lead and the Volunteer Supervisor to continue the process to include an informal interview, if acceptable to begin the process of DBS disclosure check, invite to basic standard volunteer training and at completion of the process to arrange a start date and have local induction. Volunteer Leads will be provided with a Starter Pack covering all aspects of setting up a volunteering opportunity and the various templates for the recruitment process.
- 6.8 Once a DBS application is made, the candidate should then submit an online application to join the Update Service. The application for the Update Service must be received by the DBS within 28 days of the candidate's initial DBS

application using the application form 'E' reference number generated when the DBS application is made. Alternatively, if the candidate waits for receipt of their DBS certificate, they must join the Update Service within 30 calendar days of their DBS certificate issue date.

- 6.9 The link to register for the Update Service is:  
<https://secure.cbonline.gov.uk/crsc/apply?execution=e1s1>
- 6.9.1 Registrations last for one year and there's no charge for volunteers. The registration starts from the date the DBS certificate was issued and must be renewed yearly.
- 6.10 All DBS certificates must be viewed either by the Volunteer Lead or Volunteer Supervisor, and the certificate reference number to be recorded on the Volunteer database.
- 6.11 Once the volunteer has been recruited and is starting within their role they will be asked to complete a Volunteers Agreement. This is **not an** Honorary Contract which applies to different roles within the Trust.
- 6.12 All volunteers will be issued with a photo ID badge, by the Volunteer Lead once the volunteering role(s) have been agreed. All badges will remain valid for 6 months unless agreed otherwise.
- 6.13 In the event that the volunteer applicant does not have the skills required for a particular opportunity or decides that the role is not what they are seeking, then the Volunteer Supervisor must inform the Trust Volunteer Lead. The Volunteer Lead will contact the person to ascertain whether another opportunity within the Trust would be appropriate and if so the paperwork would be sent to that Volunteer Lead to continue with a recruitment process. If there is nothing available or suitable opportunity within the Trust the Volunteer Lead will signpost the volunteer applicant to other opportunities via the voluntary sector.
- 6.14 The volunteer database will be consistently checked, and any inactive volunteers will be remained in accordance with GDPR.

## 7.0 Third Party Volunteers

- 7.1 The Trust recognises that on occasion volunteers may be recruited, managed, or supported in partnership with third party organisations, including voluntary and community sector partners, educational institutions, and other agencies. These individuals will be referred to as *Third Party Volunteers*.
- 7.2 Third Party Volunteers are those who give their time to the Trust but are formally introduced, coordinated, or otherwise linked through another organisation. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Volunteers placed by charities or community groups who have a partnership arrangement with the Trust.
- Volunteers provided via external volunteering agencies or broker services.
- Individuals undertaking volunteering opportunities as part of structured programmes operated by recognised third parties (e.g., voluntary sector organisations, faith groups, or local authorities).

7.3 The Trust is committed to ensuring that all Third Party Volunteers are afforded the same respect, support, and recognition as Trust-recruited volunteers. However, the responsibilities for recruitment, pre-engagement checks, and day-to-day management must be clearly agreed between the Trust and the partner organisation.

7.4 All Third Party Volunteers must:

- Be registered with the Trust Volunteer Lead before commencing their placement.
- Meet the same baseline requirements for safeguarding, health and safety, confidentiality, and mandatory training as set out in this policy.
- Comply with all Trust policies and procedures relevant to their volunteer role.
- Sign the Honorary Volunteer Agreement – Short-Term Third-Party Placement prior to commencing their role.

7.5 Placements for Third Party Volunteers are strictly short-term and time-limited to a maximum of three (3) months. extensions would be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to agreement between the Trust, the third-party organisation, and the volunteer.

Factors that will be taken into account include:

- Organisational capacity and ability to provide supervision and support.
- Wellbeing, safety, and personal development of the volunteer.
- Performance, reliability, and conduct of the volunteer during placement.
- Alignment with the third-party organisation's objectives and commitments.
- Compliance with safeguarding, regulatory, and governance requirements.
- Availability of learning and progression opportunities within the placement.

7.6 If, on completion of their placement, a Third Party Volunteer wishes to continue volunteering with the Trust, they must apply through the standard ELFT Volunteer recruitment process as outlined in Section 6.0 of this policy.

7.7 The partner organisation is responsible for ensuring that:

- Appropriate recruitment, vetting, and selection processes have been followed, including DBS where applicable.
- The volunteer has been fully briefed about the expectations of their role and the standards required.
- Ongoing support arrangements are in place, including points of contact for both the volunteer and the Trust.
- An official ID badge is produced, issued, and maintained for the duration of the placement.

7.8 The Trust Volunteer Lead will work collaboratively with partner organisations to:

- Ensure all volunteers are included in Trust induction and role-specific training where appropriate.
- Provide clarity regarding supervision and lines of accountability.

- Monitor volunteer experience and ensure safeguarding and duty of care obligations are fully met.

7.9 In the event of any concerns or issues involving a Third Party Volunteer, the matter will be addressed jointly by the Trust Volunteer Lead and the partner organisation, in line with the Problem Solving Procedure set out in Appendix 1 of this policy.

## **8      Volunteer Training**

8.1 All volunteers will attend a basic volunteer training programme to consist of elements of the Corporate Trust Induction e.g. safeguarding, information governance, health and safety issues, equality and diversity. Other training will include rights and responsibilities of volunteer, expectations of the Trust and of the volunteer in their role, working within boundaries, communication skills and basic mental health awareness. All of these modules will be mandatory.

8.2 Other training will be available and mandatory for particular roles but will be optional for all volunteers to attend. These additional training sessions will be developed and implemented as roles prescribe as they will be role specific.

8.3 It is important for volunteer training to be monitored as training that is not relevant to the role can be classed as a monetary benefit and the volunteer could be liable to pay tax on the worth of the course, and the Trust could be held responsible under the legislation regarding minimum wage. Therefore all volunteer training **must** be approved by the Trust Volunteer Lead who will facilitate the majority of the training.

## **9.0     Volunteer Handbook**

In conjunction with the training programme for volunteers a Volunteer Handbook will be provided by the Trust Volunteer Lead which will include handouts relating to the training programme, local induction checklists, role and task descriptions, any other paperwork relevant to the volunteering opportunity as well as the relevant Trust wide policies and procedures. Each volunteer will be issued with an ID badge which will last for 3-6 months, unless stipulated otherwise by the Volunteer Lead.

## **10.0    Confidentiality/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

Volunteers are expected to respect the confidentiality and GDPR legislation with regard to any information gained whilst volunteering in a role within the Trust. A clause regarding the need for confidentiality is stated in the Volunteer Agreement.

## **11.0 Support**

- 11.1 Every volunteer will be supported in their volunteering opportunity by a Volunteer Lead who will either support directly when they are within their allocated role or this support can be devolved to another staff member. Details of the support person will be prior to commencing role. The designated support person will meet as appropriate with the volunteer at the start of their regular attendance to ensure the volunteer has no problems with regard to their plan for the volunteering session.
- 11.2 A feedback system will be designed to capture satisfaction/experience of volunteers.
- 11.3 The Volunteer Supervisor will also receive support from the Trust Volunteer Lead with regard to any of the processes regarding recruitment, any problems or concerns and a regular forum for Volunteer Supervisor will be held to enable peer support; facilitated by the Trust Volunteer Lead.

## **12.0 Expenses**

- 12.1 A volunteer should never be out of pocket as a result of undertaking volunteering activities. Every volunteer should be encouraged to claim any costs with regard to reimbursement for travel to and from their volunteering venue. Volunteers will be encouraged to utilise public transport and use of a car will be by prior agreement with the Volunteer Lead (specifically in a situation where the volunteer has a disability) and in which case mileage rates will comply with the guidance laid down by the Inland Revenue and Trust policies. Reimbursement for meal provision up to a maximum of £4 is allowed if they volunteer for more than a 4 hour period, any reimbursement for any other out of pocket expenditure that relates to their volunteering but which must be agreed with their Volunteer Lead in advance. Volunteer expenses will be paid from the departmental budget of where the volunteer is allocated.
- 12.2 Volunteers should complete the Volunteer Expenses Claim Form and submitted on a regular basis.

## **13.0 Reward and Recognition**

The time given freely and the commitment to attending as a volunteer to assist within the Trust must always be recognised which in turn motivates and enthuses the volunteer to continue in their role. The Trust will provide events around National Volunteer Week, 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June as well as The People Participations Awards and utilised to promote the reward, recognition and

recruitment of volunteers as led by Volunteering England. Certificates of thanks will be provided at local or Trust wide events. However, showing appreciation on a day-to-day basis is a great motivator for volunteers to continue in their role.

#### **14.0 Problem Solving Procedures**

- 14.1 Volunteers do not have the same rights as employees; therefore, the process for managing concerns or complaints differs from that which applies to staff.
- 14.2 Where a concern or complaint is raised regarding a volunteer, the matter will first be addressed by the Volunteer Supervisor. The Supervisor will meet with the volunteer, outline the concern, and give the volunteer the opportunity to respond.
- 14.3 If the issue arises again, the Volunteer Supervisor must escalate the matter to the Trust Volunteer Lead. The Trust Volunteer Lead will review the situation and may contact the volunteer to hear their account. However, where ongoing issues are identified and/or the Volunteer Agreement has been breached, the placement must be brought to an end.
- 14.4 Once a concern has been escalated to the Trust Volunteer Lead, the volunteer's placement must be ended within two (2) weeks. This requirement is in place to protect service users, staff, and the integrity of the Trust's services.
- 14.5 The Trust Volunteer Lead will notify the volunteer that their placement is ending early due to ongoing issues and/or breach of the Volunteer Agreement. The volunteer may request an exit interview to provide feedback; however, the decision to end the placement will stand.

#### **15.0 End Meeting**

- 15.1 The Trust Volunteer Lead should ensure there is an opportunity to meet with the volunteer when the volunteering role is coming to an end—whether time-limited, the volunteer wishes to end the relationship, or the placement has been ended early under Section 14. Where appropriate, this meeting may be conducted by the Volunteer Supervisor.
- 15.2 After completion or early termination, the Volunteer Supervisor will send the end-of-placement form to the Trust Volunteer Lead so the volunteer can be updated and removed from the Trust Volunteer Database. The Trust Volunteer Lead will also record the reasons for the placement ending to inform future reporting on volunteering within the Trust.

15.3 Where a volunteer requests an exit interview, the Trust Volunteer Lead (or delegated Volunteer Supervisor) will arrange it. The exit interview does not alter the decision to end the placement.

## **16.0 Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

16.1 The very act of volunteering is an excellent way of bringing people together whatever their background, life experiences or culture. The Trust's equal opportunities and diversity policies apply to volunteers within their role and this will be included as part of the volunteer mandatory training when volunteers will be made aware of their responsibility to follow the letter and spirit of such policies.

16.2 This volunteer policy and volunteer involvement will be subject to monitoring via the Trust Volunteer Lead who will ensure that relevant sections of the community who are not involved are encouraged to volunteer and represent the diversity of the community the Trust serves.

## **17.0 Health and Safety**

17.1 All volunteers have an obligation to comply with Health and Safety legislation and to report any issues. Training in general on a range of Health and Safety issues will be mandatory for volunteers. As part of local induction relevant requirements will be explained and covered by the Volunteer Lead.

## **18.0 Duty of Care**

18.1 The Trust recognises its duty of care towards its volunteers. The duty of care is a common law duty to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm to others. Depending on the circumstances, apart from the mandatory training on health and safety issues, the Volunteer Lead must complete a Risk Assessment for the particular volunteer role and ensure that the volunteer is aware of the details to include provision for evening volunteering roles and therefore late journeys home.

18.2 The volunteer has a responsibility to take their own welfare seriously. The volunteer is entitled to make use of the Trust's occupational health service in the event of a volunteer-related injury occurring. Any other health concerns should be dealt with by the volunteers' own General Practitioner or health care team.

## **19.0 Insurance**

19.1 Volunteers are covered under the terms of the Trust's Liability to Third Parties Scheme which insures as "relevant persons" anyone whom the Trust authorises to act on its behalf – whether employed by another agency or in a voluntary capacity. Volunteers who are **not** recorded on the Trust Volunteer Database will therefore not be registered and therefore not entitled to make any claim against the Trust's policy but could in that event take legal action against the Trust.

## **Appendix 1 – Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers**

### **1.0 Concerns Raised About a Volunteer**

- 1.1 Volunteers do not have the same rights as employees. Therefore, concerns and complaints regarding a volunteer are handled through a simplified process designed to protect service users, staff, and the Trust.
- 1.2 If a concern arises, the Volunteer Supervisor will address it directly with the volunteer. The concern will be explained clearly, and the volunteer will have the opportunity to respond.
- 1.3 If the same issue arises again, the Volunteer Supervisor must escalate the matter to the Trust Volunteer Lead. The Trust Volunteer Lead will review the situation and may contact the volunteer to hear their side of the matter.
- 1.4 Once a concern has been escalated to the Trust Volunteer Lead, the volunteer's placement must be ended within two (2) weeks. This is to ensure the protection of service users, staff, and the overall safety and reputation of the Trust's services.
- 1.5 The Trust Volunteer Lead will inform the volunteer that their placement is ending early due to ongoing issues and/or breach of the Volunteer Agreement. This decision is final.
- 1.6 The volunteer may request an exit interview to share their views and feedback. The exit interview is optional and does not change the decision to end the placement.

### **2.0 Concerns Raised by a Volunteer**

- 2.1 If a volunteer has a concern or feels unhappy about something during their placement, they should raise this directly with their Volunteer Supervisor in the first instance.
- 2.2 If the concern is about the Volunteer Supervisor, the matter should be raised with the Trust Volunteer Lead.
- 2.3 The Trust will consider concerns raised by volunteers seriously, but as volunteering is a voluntary arrangement and not a contract of employment, there is no formal grievance or appeal process.
- 2.4 Where appropriate, the Trust Volunteer Lead may arrange an early end to the placement if it is clear the volunteering opportunity is no longer a good fit for the volunteer or the Trust.