



Southampton Voluntary Services

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VOLUNTEER POLICY

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Reviewer

D.M. Bernstein

Owner and Authorised by:

**Chief and Deputy Chief Executive and
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SOUTHAMPTON VOLUNTARY SERVICES

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Why SVS thinks it important to engage volunteers

Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS) is keen to involve volunteers in our work as we believe that their distinctive and valuable contribution enables us to enhance what we do in delivering a range of quality services and generally in “the promotion of voluntary action,”

Whilst most of our volunteering opportunities require a regular commitment on a specific day and time each week we do occasionally need temporary assistance with, for example, special projects and try therefore to accommodate people who may only have some limited time to spare. Also, within our resources, we do offer some supported volunteering placements.

Diversity

SVS is committed to the principles of diversity in all areas of our work. We are keen to ensure that our volunteers are representative of the community and the people who use our services, ensuring that we are effective in meeting the needs of all our other stakeholders too. All abilities, backgrounds and needs are recognised, valued and respected as making a positive contribution to the work that we do. We have a commitment to regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards achieving diversity in all our staff including volunteers and expect all our volunteers to subscribe to the principles and practices of SVS’ Equal Opportunities Policy.

The role of Southampton Voluntary Services

As part of our commitment to support the personal development of our volunteers, we encourage them to learn about and understand the work of an infrastructure support organisation such as SVS and have included specific information in the Volunteers’ Information File.

Becoming a volunteer at SVS

Alongside the advertisements for volunteers for the many groups and organisations that we help, we shall also include details of the volunteering roles at SVS. We will promote the opportunities on the national volunteering database, Do-it, as well as at other key points and in line with our commitment to Diversity and Equal Opportunities we shall target as appropriate any recruitment campaigns to minority, disenfranchised or hard to reach groups and within our resources will ensure accessibility to the information.

Interviews

All prospective volunteers will have an interview which will be carried out by the Volunteering Development Team Leader (VDTL) or another nominated staff member i.e. the project leader if it is for a vacancy within one of our services.

It is our intention that at all interviews prospective volunteers are encouraged to make enquiries about the work of this organisation and the voluntary role that they are applying for together with any other relevant information they require. To aid a successful volunteering experience for our volunteers, The Volunteers' Information File will be made available.

During the interview we shall seek some basic information about the prospective volunteer as well as ensuring that the placement will match the volunteer's skills, experience and interests with SVS' essential needs and requirements.

The information will be recorded on an application form and treated as confidential and stored in compliance with the current Data Protection Act but not for longer than a period of six years after the volunteering activity has ceased.

Selection

Two references are required and no volunteer will commence a placement until both are received and are satisfactory. References will be accepted from suitably qualified people who do not necessarily need to have been a former employer, provided it is not given by a close relative. It is not our intent to put up any barrier for those who may find it difficult to provide details of referees and urge any prospective volunteer for whom this may prove a difficulty to seek advice from the VDTL or other nominated staff member.

Where the volunteering activity is with children and young people under the age of 18 years or other groups who are vulnerable (examples of which would be older people/adults with learning disabilities/people likely to be incapacitated through mental health illness or physical disability) the volunteer will be advised that an application for a Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) will be applied for. The volunteer will be asked to provide appropriate evidence that will assist in proving identify together with other relevant information. The volunteer will be advised what documentation and information is required and also what the process is for making this check and will be given appropriate assistance in the completion of the Disclosure application form. An SVS Criminal Convictions Declaration will also be required to be signed.

Should the prospective volunteer be someone who has not resided in Great Britain long term we will endeavour to obtain information about any criminal convictions or proceedings in countries outside the UK. Whilst not wishing to form any barrier to prospective volunteers who may fall into this category, SVS

does not have infinite resources and would therefore look at the cost involved on an individual basis and will try to meet the charges of such investigations within the resources available at that time. If this is not possible, roles that involve contact with vulnerable people will not be available and assistance will be given to help the person access other volunteering roles that do not have a requirement to obtain a CRB Disclosure.

In exceptional circumstances where a prospective volunteer is unable to produce documents to support identification investigation, within the resources available, SVS will try to meet the cost of obtaining such identification. An example being the application for a copy Birth Certificate.

In addition to the CRB check, in accordance with the new safeguards introduced by the Vetting and Barring scheme from 12 October 2009, all volunteers whose role falls under the category of a regulated position, will be required to have an Enhanced CRB check.

If the volunteer is applying to work with children and/or vulnerable adults from July 2010 SVS will simultaneously when seeking CRB checks also apply on the volunteer's behalf for Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) registration.

From November 2011 as it will have become a legal requirement for individuals to register with the ISA if they intend volunteering with children and/or vulnerable adults, no prospective volunteer will be engaged without confirmation of registration with the ISA.

More information about the Vetting and Barring scheme together with a copy of the CRB Code of Practice is available in the Volunteer's Information File.

Volunteers are required to inform SVS if they at any stage of their volunteering with SVS receive a conviction or are subject to adverse child protection proceedings or of any other circumstances that could impinge on the credibility of this organisation.

SVS does not preclude people who wish to volunteer that have previous criminal convictions but will look at each individual situation objectively and fairly without compromising our legal duty of care taking into account:-

- The relevance of any offence in relation to the proposed area of work and volunteer role
- The nature of the former offence(s) and the seriousness of them
- The time when the offence(s) occurred and whether there has been any pattern of offending
- The age and circumstances of the applicant at the time the offence(s) occurred
- Whether there has been any pattern of offending

- Whether there has been any significant change of circumstances

A copy of SVS' Recruiting Ex-Offenders Policy will be included in the Volunteers' Information File.

In certain other areas of work professional, technical or other qualifications may be needed and volunteers involved in such activity will need to have evidence of relevant qualifications or have independent confirmation of experience.

Within resources currently available SVS will try to meet additional equipment or support needs to enable disabled people to participate fully as a volunteer.

Working as an SVS Volunteer

Induction

Before taking up the voluntary placement, all volunteers in addition to receiving a copy of this policy will be guided through the information contained in the Volunteers' Information File and undergo a period of induction which at least will include:-

- going through Health & Safety, Confidentiality (and where necessary Child Protection and other policies relevant to the volunteer's role) with the VDTL or other nominated staff member
- shown and advised of all Health & Safety procedures
- being introduced to colleagues (both paid and un-paid staff)
- Shown the place of work
- advised of any training programme
- being requested to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understood the content of the Volunteers' Information File

Guidelines giving fuller information on induction of volunteers for staff supervising their induction are included in the Volunteers' Information File.

Support

SVS is committed to demonstrating our support for all our volunteers and will take opportunities to show our recognition and appreciation. This may include arranging "thank you" events; holding special events during National Volunteers Week or by nominating volunteers for the Volunteer Certificate. Details of the latter are in the Volunteers' Information File.

All volunteers will also be supported in the following ways:-

- By having regular supervision meetings to accommodate an opportunity for effective 'two-way' communication between the volunteer and the

designated staff member. A specified time will be set aside for this. At these meetings the staff member and volunteer shall reflect on previous activity, acknowledge successful work, discuss any matters of concern, review and monitor the current voluntary activity, plan future activity and make appropriate evaluation. In some projects these sessions may be offered on a group basis but volunteers are welcome to request an occasional 1-1 meeting if they think that this would be beneficial.

- If appropriate, a period of shadowing a more experienced volunteer may be offered
- Being informed of any training relevant to the volunteer's role
- Being offered re-imbursement of any out-of-pocket expenses (see later for more detail)
- Being provided with a written reference
- Being given a written Volunteer Role Description that will describe the role and associated tasks
- Within the resources available to SVS, being provided with any appropriate tools or equipment to enable the tasks required to be carried out

Additionally the VDTL or designated staff member will ensure that there is a clear understanding of the volunteer's availability and time commitment and will not put unfair demands on them to offer more as SVS recognises it is the right of the volunteer to say "no" without causing any embarrassment.

Training

There is an exception that volunteers will attend training specific to their role.

All volunteers that have contact with children, parents and other adults in contact with children will be required to attend training on safeguarding issues that will include how to recognize and know how to act on evidence that a child's health or development is, or may be, impaired and especially when they are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

All volunteers that have regular or substantial contact with children and vulnerable adults will be made aware of the principles of the protection of Children Act and the Care Standards Act.

Trial period

To see if both the organisation and the volunteer are compatible, all volunteers will initially have a trial period. The length of time of this trial period will be agreed according to the time commitment of the volunteer.

Should the volunteer not be best suited to the needs of the organisation, an alternative voluntary role may be suggested and support will be given to find this.

Likewise, should the volunteer consider that the organisation or the volunteer role does not fulfil their requirements; they may feel able to withdraw their help without fear of embarrassment.

Volunteers must be willing to accept directions by relevant paid staff of the organisation and to abide by all SVS' policies and procedures during the trial period and further throughout their entire involvement with the organisation as an SVS volunteer.

Volunteer Role Description

To ensure that our volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and to ensure that the volunteers' roles are interesting, challenging and ultimately rewarding, all will receive a written Volunteer Role Description describing their role and related tasks before commencing volunteering. For some roles it will be possible for the volunteer to "build on" certain tasks once their confidence and experience has grown.

The Volunteer Role Description will minimally include:-

- The volunteer's role title
- A list of tasks and responsibilities
- Times/days of activity
- Place of volunteering activity

Additionally a Person Specification may be given, listing the skills and experience that are required/desired or essential.

Payment of expenses

SVS believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis and is committed to meet within the resources available reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers. These will include:

Travel between home and place of volunteering activity. This includes public transport or petrol/mileage allowance. If traveling by bus, the ticket must be retained and given to the VDTL or designated staff member, by way of receipt. If the volunteer is using his/her own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept. The mileage allowance paid will be concurrent with the general SVS staff mileage allowance. If a journey is excess of 20 miles (round trip) volunteers are required to check the arrangements with the VDTL or designated staff member beforehand.

If working longer than five hours in any one period, a subsistence allowance to a maximum of £3.00, will be paid. Receipts for items purchased must be retained

and produced together with a completed claim on the SVS Expenses Claim form. A copy of this form together with further guidance is to be found in the Volunteers' Information File.

Childcare and other care allowance will be considered and a contribution may be made towards these within the resources available.

Likewise a contribution, according to the resources available, may be made towards any parking charges incurred during a period of volunteering activity.

Expenses are paid retrospectively, unless otherwise agreed, at the end of each month,

SVS recognises that not all volunteers wish to accept re-imburement of expenses but request that a record of expenses is still kept by the volunteer and a claim made which may be donated back to the charity. Preferably using the Gift Aid scheme for registered tax payers.

SVS is aware that in some circumstances voluntary activity may sometimes affect entitlement to statutory benefits. More information for volunteers, who are benefit claimants and are requesting re-imburement of expenses, may be found in the Volunteers' Information File.

Availability

SVS believes that it should not be an embarrassing experience for a volunteer to say that they wish to stop their engagement with us. It's appreciated that there are many reasons why volunteers "move on". It is acknowledged that often it is through achievement and success although sometimes it may be through finding the placement unsatisfactory. If the latter, SVS appreciates the opportunity of hearing the volunteer's views during an exit interview. This affords SVS the opportunity too, when appropriate, to review our current practices, procedures and policies. When a volunteer wishes to advise us that they wish to leave, it is appreciated that reasonable notice is given. SVS will offer all volunteers the option of an exit interview.

Problems

As in any organisation, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that the occasion will not arise, if there are any concerns in the first instance the volunteer should speak to the VDTL or designated staff member who will try and resolve the matter informally. If the matter remains unresolved reference will be made to the SVS Problem Solving Procedure for volunteers, a copy of which is in the SVS Volunteer's information File.

Whilst all would be done to resolve any difficulties there may be occasions when there would be no alternative but to end a volunteer's engagement. It is hoped that the situation would not arise and declining further help from a volunteer would only happen in circumstances that could not be amicably resolved.

Examples of reasons leading to the volunteer's engagement being ended are:-

- The volunteers not fulfilling the requirements of the Volunteer Role Description
- A breach of any of SVS' policies or procedures
- When the volunteer is unable or unwilling to be directed in their involvement by a paid member of staff, or they are unable to relate effectively as part of the overall team

Miscellaneous

Identification

All volunteers are required to wear an identification badge at all times during their volunteering activity.

Insurance

SVS will protect our volunteers by having in place Public Liability and Employers' Liability Policies

Confidentiality

A copy of SVS' Confidentiality policy is contained in the Volunteers' Information File. SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of this policy and familiar with its content. During the induction period either the VDTL or designated staff member will go through it with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with the requirements of the policy.

No information or information about personal circumstances of our volunteers will be discussed outside SVS unless we have a duty of care to make a disclosure.

All information about a volunteer will in compliance with SVS' Handling of Confidential Information policy and held in a secure manner and in compliance too with the requirements of the current Data-Protection Act.

Health & Safety.

A copy of SVS' Health & Safety policy is contained in the Volunteer's Information File. SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of this policy and familiar with its

content and during the induction period either the VDTL or designated staff member will go through it with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with the requirements of the policy.

If the volunteer's role includes driving the volunteer's attention will be drawn to SVS Transport Policy and driving at work guidelines and will be required to undertake a driver safety checklist with either the VDTL or designated staff member who will go through these with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with the requirements of the policy and taken note of the advice in the guidelines.

Volunteers using their own motor vehicles in connection with their volunteering for SVS must advise their insurance company that they are using the vehicle for such purposes. Should any additional premium be requested by the insurer, the volunteer is to advise the VDTL or other designated staff member and subject to the resources available, this additional charge would be deemed as a fair and redeemable out of pocket expense. Vehicles must be in roadworthy condition with a current MOT certificate. Sight of insurance documents, MOT certificate and driving license will be asked for.

Equal Opportunities

A copy of SVS' Equal Opportunities policy is contained in the Volunteer's Information File. SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of this policy and familiar with its content and during the induction period either the VDTL or designated staff member will go through it with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with the requirements of the policy.

Violence & Harassment

A copy of SVS' Violence & Harassment policy is contained in the Volunteer's Information File. SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of this policy and familiar with its content and during the induction period either the VDTL or designated staff member will go through it with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with the requirements of the policy.

Smoking/alcohol/non prescriptive substances

SVS operates a policy of no smoking within the Voluntary Action Centre (VAC) or within its immediate environs. This policy also applies to volunteers when attending as a representative of SVS at any public event. Smoking is not permitted in front of clients or the public at any time whilst engaged in voluntary activity. Likewise there is to be no consumption of alcohol or non prescriptive substances within volunteering time.

If a volunteer is found to be smoking as stated above or has consumed alcohol or non prescriptive substances during their period of volunteering this would be considered gross misconduct and subject to the volunteering activity being revoked.

This policy is found within the SVS Office Protocol, a copy of which will be made available to the volunteer upon request.

SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of this policy and during the induction period either the VDTL or designated staff member will go through it with the volunteer to ensure that the volunteer has understood the content and agreed to comply with its requirements.

Copyright

Should a volunteer produce any work that falls within the category of being 'intellectual property' for example, the design of a leaflet or logo, SVS will ask the volunteers to assign (transfer) copyright to them by signing an agreement that will set out the details of; the parties involved (e.g. the volunteer and SVS); the work the license covers; how the work can be used and over what period of time. This will be done strictly on the understanding that SVS does not intend to create an employment contract; that the volunteer has undertaken the work as an activity without expectation of financial reward and SVS will, if requested, give the nominal sum of one pence to the volunteer to validate the transfer of ownership.

If you require this information in a different format, we will endeavour to meet your needs within the resources we have available. Please contact SVS, The Voluntary Action Centre, Kingsland Square, St. Mary Street, Southampton SO14 1NW. Telephone 023 8022 8291.