



Involving Volunteers Policy

Adopted: 16 June 2016

Reviewed: 1 August 2019, 11 August 2022

Next Review: August 2025

Policy Aims

Support Staffordshire wishes to establish working methods which lead to satisfying and effective placements for volunteers and Support Staffordshire. All teams are expected to create meaningful and productive roles for volunteers and to recruit and support their own volunteers. We are especially mindful of involving volunteers in accordance with best practice given it is one of our own main organisational aims with regard to Volunteering for All.

Why do we Involve Volunteers?

Volunteering is a mutually beneficial activity.

For Support Staffordshire, involving volunteers:

- increases capacity to provide services
- brings a range of qualities, skills and expertise that complement the skills of paid staff e.g. languages, cultural understanding, specialist skills, personal experiences
- contributes specialist knowledge and local knowledge
- enhances local reputation
- improves staff morale and engenders a team working culture
- helps reflect and strengthen links between us and the communities we serve
- increases diversity which enriches the organisation

- demonstrates that you value your community or clients and their experiences and that you want to invest in their future
- helps to secure additional resources through volunteer hours match-funding
- provides governance and stewardship through the Trustee Board

For individuals the benefits can include:

- feeling part of something that makes a difference
- improved mental/physical health and wellbeing
- personal development and improved confidence
- enhanced skills and employability prospects

For communities, volunteering can:

- strengthen local connections and bonds
- enhance trust and community resilience
- promote understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures
- provide people with a voice through greater participation in local democracy

Policy Statements

1. Definition of a Volunteer

At Support Staffordshire, we define a volunteer as anyone who, without financial or material remuneration or expectation of remuneration, beyond reimbursement of agreed expenses incurred during his or her volunteer duties, performs a task, activity or role that we have agreed for them to do, on behalf of Support Staffordshire.

2. Role or task-led approach

Support Staffordshire supports the principle of 'task-led' volunteering as a fundamental way of working with volunteers. We will consider the needs of the organisation from the business plan through to team delivery plans as a starting point for volunteer involvement. We will develop clear roles and use these as the basis for recruiting and selecting volunteers. All volunteers will have a clear role and purpose that contributes to our aims and objectives.

3. Volunteer status

Support Staffordshire believes no role is beyond the capability of a volunteer simply based on their volunteer rather than employee status. All roles are subject to the individual having the right experience, skill, knowledge and commitment to accomplish the task. We aim to make good use of such skills, knowledge and abilities to further our aims and objectives. Volunteers do not have to be members of Support Staffordshire.

4. The staff-volunteer relationship

Support Staffordshire encourages volunteers and staff to work positively together and to motivate and support one another in their work. We will not intentionally use volunteers to directly displace staff. At the same time, staff should not undermine the role of volunteers.

5. Planning and Budgeting

Support Staffordshire recognises that supervising and managing volunteers and developing volunteering requires financial support and has implications on our resources. We will properly plan and budget for involving volunteers in our work.

6. Volunteer Recruitment

Support Staffordshire views volunteers as a valuable resource. Volunteers will be recruited pro-actively, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. The main qualification for recruitment shall be the suitability to perform a role or task on behalf of Support Staffordshire.

We do however recognise the opportunity that volunteering offers to broaden our involvement of residents who are under-represented in our workforce, and may where appropriate favour recruitment which leads to improved involvement from residents with protected characteristics and/or rurality.

Volunteers may be recruited either through an interest in specific advertised roles or through a general interest in volunteering which will later be matched with a specific role. In placing a volunteer in a particular role attention shall be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the role.

7. Information management, checks and references

Support Staffordshire will handle volunteer data confidentially, securely, properly and in accordance with the law. We will seek references and carry out checks on volunteers when appropriate to the role. Volunteers will be required to complete the Support Staffordshire registration form consenting to giving us the basic information required by us as a responsible volunteering organisation.

8. Induction

Support Staffordshire aims to provide all volunteers with a proper induction to the organisation and their role within it.

9. Supervision and management

Support Staffordshire will establish an appropriate point of contact, the 'volunteer manager', for every volunteer. Levels of supervision and management will be proportionate to the role.

10. Support and training

Support Staffordshire will ensure that volunteers are properly supported by the organisation. We will offer all volunteers support and self-development opportunities appropriate and relevant to their roles.

11. Health, safety and welfare

Support Staffordshire will undertake to look after volunteer health, safety and welfare in relation to the volunteer role and all volunteers will be made aware of their and our responsibilities with regard to health and safety policy and practice as it applies to their role. We will insure volunteers in the event of an accident occurring in the workplace.

12. Equal opportunities

Support Staffordshire considers all volunteer involvement to be subject to our policies and procedures on equality, diversity and inclusion. Although not currently covered by equality legislation, we will not discriminate amongst volunteers unfairly on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, physical, mental or emotional disability, financial, family or other personal disadvantage.

Additionally, we will not discriminate unfairly against persons with historical criminal convictions and will only consider previous offences if relevant to the volunteer role under consideration.

13. Feedback and Problem Solving

We will offer volunteers regular opportunities to feedback on their experiences, positive and negative, to encourage continuous improvement in how we involve volunteers.

Support Staffordshire will deal with volunteer problems, criticism, complaints and grievances professionally and consistently according to problem solving procedures outlined for this purpose

14. Communications

Support Staffordshire will ensure appropriate and timely communications with volunteers, both from the volunteer manager and from the organisation as a whole through regular communications, including face to face meetings.

15. Volunteer Expenses

Support Staffordshire supports the principle that no volunteer should be left out of pocket as a result of volunteering for the organisation and we will pay expenses for all activities that form part of the volunteering role at the same rate as staff.

In addition, we are able to offer reimbursement of expenses for commuting to the office or other place where you volunteer, up to a maximum mileage of 25 miles each way; on the basis that most Staffordshire residents live within 25 miles of one of our offices.

16. Recognition

Support Staffordshire will endeavour to recognise the contribution of volunteers wherever appropriate.

17. Quality

Support Staffordshire will aim to deliver a measurably high quality experience for all volunteers and we will offer volunteering opportunities that are positive and rewarding to the volunteer.

18. Leaving Us and Provision of References

Support Staffordshire will support and encourage volunteers to move on when the time is right for them or Support Staffordshire, in a positive way, whether that is within (to a new role) or outside of Support Staffordshire.

We will provide references for volunteers where their length of service and role makes it appropriate for us to do so.

Volunteer responsibilities

Support Staffordshire considers all volunteers to have reciprocal responsibilities to the organisation. Some of these relate to the particular role undertaken. However, all volunteers have general responsibilities that we expect them to undertake when volunteering as follows:

- inform us if they do not feel confident they have received the guidelines and information necessary to carry out their role
- make sure they are aware of policies and guidelines that are relevant to their role
- meet the general commitments necessary to carry out their role
- be mindful of their status as a Support Staffordshire ambassador in their community
- ensure that no illegal or criminal misuse of Support Staffordshire assets takes place
- respect confidentiality of information of which he or she may become aware whilst volunteering

Volunteering Procedures and Guidance

To support the practical implementation of these policy statements we have developed the following procedures and guidelines, all information contained in 5.6 on S drive.

1. Involving Volunteers Handbook for Staff

This handbook gives an overview of the whole process from enquiries and recruitment to support and recognition.

2. Volunteer Roles Descriptions

3. Volunteer Recruitment

Advertising, application forms and interviews

4. Volunteer Law

5. Volunteer Induction

Checklist and forms

6. Volunteer Support and Training

7. Volunteer Retention and Recognition

8. Volunteers Who Leave

9. Volunteer Personnel Folders

There is also an excel spreadsheet detailing the roles, names and current status of all volunteers that all volunteer managers must keep up to date.