



# Volunteer Policy

2021

## **General**

### **Objectives of the Policy**

Volunteers give their time freely to the Volunteer Centre (VC), and in return they have the right to be recognised for the work that they do, and have involvement and participation throughout the organisation as appropriate. We believe, therefore, that it is important that a set of principles is established relating to VCKC's commitment to volunteers, striving to ensure that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly. By means of this policy we hope that volunteers will feel that they are treated respectfully and professionally and that their needs are fully considered.

### **Why we work with volunteers**

- The VC recognises the huge contribution that volunteers make by enhancing and extending its services and making them accessible to as diverse a range of users as possible. In 1969 Anstice Lady Goodman, herself a volunteer, founded the Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre. Hence volunteer involvement within the VC goes back to when the organisation was started, and we recognise that without volunteers, such as Lady Goodman, the organisation may not have come into being.
- Volunteers are an integral part of the VC team and they contribute in many ways towards achieving the mission of the VC.
- Volunteers bring individual varied experiences, expertise, independent viewpoints and a variety of community perspectives and links to the VC.
- Volunteers extend and enhance the services offered to users of the VC.
- Volunteers enable the VC to promote good practice in working with volunteers. They also provide the VC with opportunities to experiment with new activities and projects.

Within the main body of the organisation's mission statement the VC expresses its support and commitment to volunteering.

### **Mission Statement**

**The Volunteer Centre aims to support and facilitate the development of quality community services through the promotion of voluntary action throughout Kensington & Chelsea.**

- Raising the profile and impact of the value of volunteering as an important contribution to identifying and meeting the needs of the community

- Provision of central volunteer recruitment programmes to meet identified community and organisational needs in the borough
- Provision of central volunteer advice, information, placement and support service for volunteers, including those with special needs
- Promotion of good practice in the deployment of volunteers

The VC recognises and values the racial and cultural diversity of the area in which it works and aims to promote equality of opportunity for those who use its services.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The VC strives for equal access for volunteers and will not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, etc.

We recognise that there are a number of groups of people who, despite wanting to volunteer, are faced with obstacles to volunteering, for example, volunteers with extra support needs. The VC endeavours to find ways of overcoming as many of these obstacles as it can, so that these groups can be involved.

A copy of the VC's Equal Opportunities policy is in the Policies and Procedure file and volunteers are expected to have an understanding of and commitment to this policy.

### **Who can volunteer at the Volunteer Centre**

The VC welcomes anyone who wishes to volunteer for any reason, on the understanding that it is an activity that is undertaken freely and by choice with no concern for financial gain, and that the volunteer has the skills needed for the role. The work done by a volunteer will be specifically described in a role description. We also provide placements for people on the government New Deal programme.

### **Staff and Volunteers**

Volunteers are an important part of the VC team and help us to offer our high level of service.

The VC strives to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities in many areas and levels. We will treat volunteers with the same equality of opportunity, respect and fairness as staff. We also

aim to fully include volunteers in the organisation, which means that they are invited to take part in team consultations, team outings, away days, etc.

In order to deliver an effective and quality service the staffing and volunteer structure is reviewed on a regular basis. The VC will not replace paid staff with volunteers, as we believe that it is wrong to undermine paid jobs in this way, and volunteering should enhance and extend the work of staff, not replace them.

### **Professional & Technical Skills**

The VC recognises that certain roles require professional or technical qualifications for the purpose of both insurance and quality assurance. Volunteers will only be placed into roles of this kind if they hold an appropriate qualification and/or reasonable experience or expertise.

### **Role Description**

All VC volunteer tasks should be meaningful and worthwhile. The work of each volunteer is detailed in a role description, which is agreed with them before they commence their voluntary work. The Role Description lists in detail the tasks that the volunteer will be required to undertake. See example appendix 1.

### **Volunteer Agreement**

Volunteers are asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement establishing what voluntary work they agree to do for the VC and what the VC undertakes to provide for them. The document in no way implies a real or perceived legally binding contract of employment. See example appendix 2.

## **Induction & Involvement of new volunteers**

### **Induction**

Volunteers receive a full induction to their work at the VC. This includes an introduction to all staff and volunteers, a tour of the building, an introduction to the systems and working of the organisation, reading of the VC's key policies and being shown the IT system and how to use it. In addition, they will be introduced to the key tasks that they will be expected to undertake, and encouraged to begin working on these as soon as possible. See Induction procedure appendix 3.

## **Volunteer Handbook**

Volunteers receive a copy of the Volunteer Handbook, which gives details about all the VC's services and guidelines about volunteering at the VC.

## **Social Events**

Volunteers will be invited to all VC social events.

## **Support, Supervision and Evaluation**

### **Informing Existing Workers**

The VC will inform all staff and existing volunteers of the appointment of a new volunteer prior to their first day in the office either by email, team meeting or the noticeboard. In addition a copy of the Organisational Structure, showing details of current staff and volunteers and their roles within the organisation, will be given to new volunteers.

### **Support and Supervision**

It is the intention of the VC to support its volunteers to enable them to carry out their tasks to the best of their ability. Volunteers, like staff, are entitled to line management, supervision and support. Volunteers are accountable to a named person from whom they can expect support and supervision. Supervision is time spent with the volunteer's supervisor to review tasks done and look at tasks that are to be done, in view of the volunteers aspirations and development needs, and work required to be done by the VC. Sessions are carried out in a supportive and encouraging environment and are held on a regular basis, according to how much time is spent volunteering.

The members of the team have the duty to ensure that the volunteers are not left alone in the office. The volunteers work should always be supervised by a member of the staff.

The VC provides references, upon request, for volunteers and ex-volunteers who are applying for paid employment or other voluntary work.

### **Communication**

In order to involve volunteers as fully as possible the VC is committed to keeping volunteers informed about the activities of the organisation and facilitating volunteers input and

comments. This will demonstrate the value and significance placed upon volunteers and their work.

### **Absence/illness**

The VC acknowledges that volunteers are performing a valued role within the organisation and hence are relied upon by staff to fulfill their agreed duties at stated times. Volunteers need to understand that if they are unable to turn up or expect to be late it is important that they inform their supervisor as soon as possible. We would also appreciate advance notice in respect of holidays and days off. Continued inability to attend or contact the VC to explain an absence will result in a review of the volunteer's placement at the VC.

### **Office Protocol**

### **Copyright**

Any work produced in the course of a volunteering at the VC is copyrighted to the VC and not to the volunteer. The volunteer can, however, have copies of the work that they produce to use for their own purposes, but the work itself belongs to the VC. When a volunteer commences work with the VC we ask them to sign a disclaimer form to this effect.

### **Representing the Volunteer Centre**

Where volunteers are representing the VC at a meeting or an external event they must behave in a manner that will not endanger the VC's professional reputation. Volunteers are not authorised to speak formally on behalf of the VC to the press, the volunteering sector or other interested parties. See the VC Communications and Style guide for more details.

### **Personal use of Volunteer Centre equipment**

- ***Computers***

If volunteers wish to use VC computers for jobsearch activities or other personal usage this should be negotiated with their supervisor. It is envisaged that in any one week

the time spent on jobsearch would not be greater than that spent doing voluntary work.

- ***Telephones***

If volunteers need to make urgent local telephone calls whilst at the VC they can do so. The making of long or numerous personal telephone calls is not allowed. Permission must be sought for calls which are outside the London area and these must be paid for.

- ***Photocopier***

Personal photocopying is at the discretion of a volunteer's supervisor.

## **Problem Solving**

### **General**

The VC has a complaints procedure because although we always aim to provide services in an accessible and professional manner we recognise that there might be times when volunteers feel less than satisfied with our performance. We have a complaints procedure in order to give volunteers the opportunity to express their concerns and to provide us with feedback to improve our services.

### **With the Volunteer Centre**

If a volunteer has a complaint about a VC staff member that they feel cannot be resolved informally then there is a Grievance Procedure for formal complaints. To formally complain they should write to: **The Executive Director at Kensington and Chelsea Volunteer Centre.**

### **With Volunteers**

If a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer that they feel cannot be resolved informally then they should follow the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure, details of which are in the 'Policies and Procedures' file.

## **Disciplinary Procedure**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the VC or who fail to perform their voluntary work satisfactorily are subject to disciplinary procedures. Wherever possible this includes a sequence of verbal and written warnings.

They can expect, as part of this process:

- supportive and constructive criticism
- clear details of inappropriate or unsatisfactory performance or behaviour
- suggestions regarding what and how to improve; and an agreed period of time to demonstrate improvement after each stage, unless their behaviour warrants immediate dismissal (see below).

Volunteers may be discharged without warning if we believe that there is sufficient cause, i.e. where behaviour is too inappropriate, harmful or dangerous for the volunteer to continue to work with us. In such cases we reserve the right to request a volunteer to leave immediately. Examples of this include:

- a breach of confidentiality
- acts that bring the VC into disrepute
- acts that contravene the VC's Health and Safety policy
- any verbal or physical act that contravenes the VC's Equal Opportunities policy
- false declarations of any kind made in relation to securing your placement here
- physical and/or verbal abuse of services users or co-workers

This is not an exhaustive list but it gives an idea of the kinds of behaviour that we would find unacceptable. Any volunteer who has been dismissed and who feels that s/he has been unfairly treated has a time-limited right to appeal to the Board of Trustees.

## **Leaving Procedure**

### **General**

VC staff are aware that volunteers will leave at some point, and we do not expect them to volunteer with the VC indefinitely. We appreciate that they will want to move on at some point. We encourage them to be open about their reasons for volunteering when they start work with us and how long they might want to do voluntary work for.

## **Notice**

Ideally, we would like a month's notice of a volunteer's intention to leave the VC, and if this is not possible a minimum of a week's notice. Volunteers are a valued and an integral part of the VC team, and if a volunteer leaves we need to find another volunteer to replace them and this takes time.

## **Exit Interview**

All volunteers who leave their voluntary work at the VC have an 'exit interview' with their supervisor, preferably on their last working day. The purpose of this interview is for the supervisor to learn how the volunteering experience has been for the volunteer, in order that we can make changes in the way that we treat volunteers in the future if necessary. It is also to help the volunteer assess what they have learnt from their volunteering experience, and a chance to quantify the work that has been done to ensure that the VC has sufficient details about this in case we are requested to provide references for the volunteer in the future. The 'exit interview' will include the following questions:-

- What work have you achieved?
- What have you enjoyed most about the work?
- What have you enjoyed least?
- What have been the challenges of the work?
- What have been the challenges of working at the VC and with this team of people?
- How have you adapted to these challenges?
- What have you enjoyed/not enjoyed about volunteering at the VC?

Our aim is that the 'exit interview' is a positive experience, which will 'round off' the volunteering placement for the volunteer and be of benefit to them as well as giving the VC useful information about what it is like to be a VC volunteer.

## **References**

The VC will provide references for volunteers up until a year after they have ceased to volunteer for us.

## **Future Assistance**

If a volunteer is leaving because their role at the VC has come to an end, the VC will assist them in finding suitable alternative voluntary work, if this is what the volunteer wants.

## **Policies**

### **Expenses**

The VC reimburses travel expenses for volunteers. Receipts must be provided for all expense claims. If a volunteer works for 4 hours or more during one day they can also claim lunch expenses of up to £5. All claims must be made within 3 months of the expenses being incurred.

### **Insurance**

The VC believes it to be important that volunteers have the same level of insurance cover as staff. Volunteers are, therefore, covered by the VC's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in work on the VC's behalf.

### **Health and Safety**

VC volunteers are covered by the organisation's Health and Safety policy. A copy of the policy is in the Policies and Procedure file. The VC takes matters related to health and safety very seriously and health and safety issues will be fully covered as part of the volunteer's induction.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as staff, which is that they must ensure that information about people who register as volunteers is accessible only to staff and volunteers who need it. People using the VC services may be asked to give their ethnicity and other such information for equal opportunities monitoring purposes. This information should not be traceable back to individuals. Many organisations that register with us do not mind having their details passed on to prospective volunteers but some, such as women's refuges, require that we keep their address and telephone numbers confidential for reasons of security. Volunteers should check with supervisors if in doubt. A copy of the policy is in the Policies and Procedure file.

## **Data Protection**

As the information that we hold about volunteers and organisations is entered onto a database it is subject to the Data Protection act. Our services users have the right to see their records. We ask that they give us two days notice so that we can ensure that their files are accessible. See the Data Protection section of the VC Confidentiality policy for more details.