

Volunteer Policy

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1. Policy Control

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2.0	volunteer policy	14/08/2016
Created by TB		
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2. Community First

Mission Statement

To be the difference that makes a difference in our communities. We are helping people and changing lives

About us

Community First is the trading name of Communities First Wessex (CFW) and provides advice, support and services to communities across East Hampshire, Havant, Winchester and surrounding areas. Locally based, we encourage voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to thrive, enabling community resilience and delivering services that promote people's well-being and prosperity. Our aim is to make life better for those we serve and work with and to build a strong and influential voluntary and community sector. Specifically we:

- Provide information and guidance to help local organisations and people make a difference in their neighbourhoods
- Promote the vital work that voluntary organisations do in turn helping local authorities achieve impact and businesses to share valuable skills and resources.
- Help groups find and raise money for local projects and services
- Recruit and train volunteers to play an active role supporting their local communities
- Deliver high quality training for individuals and VCSE organisations

3. Our Volunteer Services

Our volunteer service aims to champion the work of volunteers. Working collaboratively with organisations, groups, individuals and local business we work to ensure we broker volunteering opportunities that are the right fit for all parties.

Our volunteer service team can help by:

- Sharing our expertise on the volunteering market locally
- Providing a brokerage service linking individuals, groups and local business together, sharing skills and resources
- Working in partnership with other organisations to develop new volunteering opportunities
- Raising the profile of volunteering
- Broker responsible business opportunities
- Promoting good practice in volunteering

- Participating in national and local campaigns on issues that affect volunteering
- Help shape the future of volunteering in our local communities

4. Purpose of this policy

- To provide a framework for all CFW staff across the organisation in considering involving volunteers in their work
- To provide an example of good practice for the local VCSE sector
- To provide a foundation on which our involvement of volunteers will be based
- To ensure a consistent approach to supporting volunteers in ways that are appropriate to their volunteering role
- To help ensure fairness and consistency when involving a diverse group of people. Being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad-hoc basis

5. Vision for Volunteering

- The Board, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) will consider involving volunteers when planning, contracting, monitoring revising and providing services
- Involving volunteers will become an integral part of the organization's culture, 'leading by example'
- Volunteering will become a key method in the organisation's wider stakeholder engagement - Our volunteers are our ambassadors in the community

6. Definition of a volunteer

A 'volunteer' is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without financial remuneration, except for the payment of actual out of pocket expenses

Community First actively encourages the engagement and involvement of volunteers across all areas of the organisation. It is acknowledged that volunteer engagement is crucial to the success of the organisation and that without the personal generosity of people working for no personal compensation, the organisation would not be able to deliver the range of services that it currently offers.

It is not the intention of Community First to use volunteers as a replacement to paid staff but as complimentary to the professional staff team in place.

Where paid staff express a wish to volunteer in addition to their role, this is done outside of the scope of their normal duties and hours of paid employment.

As part of its commitment to volunteers an agreement is entered into at the start of the relationship. It is accepted that the volunteer can terminate this agreement without notice at any time and similarly Community First can decide to terminate the role if it is no longer required.

7. Recruitment, Induction and Training

All volunteer recruitment will be co-ordinated through the Volunteer Service.

For a detailed breakdown of the procedure cf. appendix 1 (Recruitment and selection process).

8. Confidentiality

When working within the organisation it may be possible that volunteers will see confidential information during the course of their work. Within the induction process confidentiality will be discussed and any breach of this will result in the termination of the volunteer's placement.

9. Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Community First is fully committed to Equal Opportunities and has a statement to this effect within the volunteer agreement as well as a separate policy promoting Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Volunteer placements within the organisation are subject to CFW'S Equal Opportunity Policy (see staff handbook). Volunteer placements will be open to all individuals irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, religious belief, marital status or other protected characteristics covered under the Equalities Act (2010), this list is not exhaustive. CFW will actively encourage volunteers from all sections of the local communities in which it operates.

All volunteers will be required to acknowledge they have read and understood CFW'S Equal Opportunity Policy. If a volunteer is unwilling or unable to model the behaviours and values set out in the equal opportunities policy then this will be the subject of discussion between the volunteer and the responsible manager and may result in the termination of the volunteer placement. If a volunteer feels subject to discriminatory behaviour during the course of their placement with CFW the volunteer has recourse to the "problem solving" procedure and "whistle blowing" procedure as appropriate.

We are committed to supporting the rehabilitation of offenders where appropriate (i.e.

activities not exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders 1974) across the organisation's activities. For roles where a DBS check is required having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent an individual from volunteering within the organisation. Only relevant convictions will be taken into consideration when assessing an individual's suitability for a voluntary role.

We are fully committed to equality and diversity in all areas of our work and feel we are better able to meet the needs of stakeholders and users as a direct result working within anti-discriminatory framework.

10. Expenses

We recognise that we benefit greatly from the vast amount of time, expertise and skill that our volunteers bring to our organisation. Therefore we encourage the claiming of out of pocket expenses in line with the guidance from HMRC.

11. Insurance

Volunteers are covered by CFW insurance policies including public liability and, where appropriate, professional indemnity for advice services.

12. Health & Safety

There is a separate policy that covers the Health & Safety within the organisation and volunteers will be made aware of this as part of their induction. It is the responsibility of the volunteer's responsible manager to make volunteers aware of the necessary risk assessment for their workplace.

13. Problem solving procedures

If a volunteer wishes to make a complaint this should in the first instance be discussed with their supervisor.

If a volunteer makes a complaint

This part of the problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to complain if they believe they have been unfairly treated.

Stage 1 - Oral complaint

Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, should be discussed with the volunteer. If the complaint is about the volunteer's manager, then the matter should be referred to the Chief Executive. During

this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the Chief Executive.

Stage 2 - In writing

Volunteers making a complaint in writing should do so within 3 weeks of meeting with the Chief Executive who will respond in writing to the volunteer within 3 weeks of receiving their letter.

Stage 3 - Right to appeal

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal to the Chair of the Trustees. At the Chair's discretion this may be delegated to the member of the Board who is designated Volunteer Champion. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting but the decision of the Chair (or his/her representative) is final. Volunteers have no rights under employment law unless they can prove that they are in fact employees.

If there is a complaint about a volunteer, or the behaviour of the volunteer in the opinion of the Volunteer's Manager is unacceptable.

This part of the problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to be told why action is being taken, the right to state their case and the right to appeal.

Stage 1 - Oral discussion

The volunteer's manager will discuss with the volunteer the nature of the complaint, the reasons why and then to identify any remedial action e.g. training, change of role etc. A deadline for reviewing the situation will be set. If someone else raised the complaint, where appropriate the third party will be kept informed of the action taken.

Stage 2 - Written warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved at stage one, the volunteer's manager will issue the volunteer with a warning in writing outlining the reason(s). The volunteer has the right to state their case to their Manager or if there is an issue with the volunteer's manager to the Chief Executive - the volunteer has the right to be accompanied by a person of their choice to any such meeting. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set, and help offered to the volunteer. However, if the organisation decides to require the volunteer to leave, then the volunteer has the right to appeal. The decision to require a volunteer to leave should be a last resort.

Stage 3 - Right to appeal

If a volunteer has been required to leave then they may appeal in writing to the Chair of Trustees. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at any meeting called. The Chair's decision is final.

Exceptions

There are some occasions on which a volunteer can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that are deemed equal in nature to gross misconduct, e.g. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, and deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer's activity needs to be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.

Appendix 1 – Recruitment and selection process

Volunteers will be selected through the following process:

- A Role Description, outlining the specific tasks, responsibilities desirable skills and knowledge will be drawn up and agreed.
- A Person Specification outlining the specific skills and abilities required for the role will be drawn up and agreed.
- The vacancy will be advertised via the volunteer service
- Once a prospective volunteer has been identified the volunteer will be invited to complete a volunteer application form.
- Using the Role Description and Person Specification, the potential volunteer will be invited to an informal discussion on the proposed role, its requirements and establish each other's expectations, with a view to assessing mutual suitability. Following the meeting the responsible manager will make a decision within one week regarding the individual's suitability for the particular role and inform the volunteer and the volunteer service.
- Individuals who are not seen as appropriate for a volunteer role are entitled to receive either verbal or written feedback as to why they were not deemed suitable.
- For specific roles a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be required. This information will be included in any advertisement and any placement will be subject to satisfactory completion of a DBS.
- Prior to commencing their placement with CFW successful volunteers must provide 2 referees, excluding relations, who can attest to their character and suitability for the position. CFW will request references from these people using the standard letter and their placement with CFW is dependent upon receiving suitable references.
- It is recognized that not all people will be able to provide 2 referees, e.g. refugees or those new to the UK. In these cases commencement will be at the discretion of the service manager subject to SMT approval.
- A volunteer arrangement setting out what the volunteer can expect from CFW and CFW's expectations of the volunteer is read, agreed and signed by both the service manager and volunteer on commencement of the volunteer's placement. This is not intended to be a contractual agreement.
- Upon joining the organisation, the volunteer will be invited to participate in an induction programme the content and duration of which will depend on the hours and complexity of the role.
- The volunteer will have a one month probationary period after which the volunteer and their manager will meet, discuss the period and decide whether both parties wish to continue with the arrangement, terminate the arrangement or extend the probation as

appropriate.

- If a volunteer feels the demands/tasks requested of them are unrealistic then the volunteer has the right to refuse them and discuss the issue with the appropriate Manager. If unresolved refer to the 'problem solving procedure'.

Once started the volunteer's manager will then provide feedback on an on-going basis to the volunteer:

- support
- feedback on their contribution
- an annual appraisal
- adequate office accommodation, equipment and services to perform their tasks effectively
- necessary training to perform the role
- current information to keep the volunteer informed
- team meetings approximately every 3-6 months