



WOCA – Volunteers Policy

Approved by WOCA Committee: September 2022

Date of next policy review: September 2024

Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out the broad principles for volunteering in WOCA. It is of relevance to everyone in the organisation and has been adopted by the Management Committee. The policy will be reviewed every 2 years at a minimum, to ensure that it remains up-to-date and relevant to the volunteering needs of our organisation. WOCA reserves the right to change any aspect of this policy at any time.

Our Commitment

WOCA acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many different ways, and that volunteering can benefit users of our services, paid staff, other volunteers and the wider community. We value the contributions made by volunteers and we are committed to involving volunteers in appropriate roles, and in ways which are supportive of the volunteers and beneficial to our organisation.

We see volunteers as people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy, skills and experience to benefit our organisation and the wider community. We also acknowledge the unique contribution that volunteers make and the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship where the volunteer also gets something from the volunteering role as well.

Our Values

WOCA is committed to volunteering and we will:

- not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff. Their role will complement the role of paid staff, be beneficial to the organisation and the volunteers (this includes ensuring that volunteers are not used during any times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff)
- ensure volunteers have a defined place in the structure of the organisation
- take appropriate steps to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers
- recognise that the volunteer role is a 'gift relationship' – no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their volunteering role. Likewise, our organisation is not compelled to provide regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer
- acknowledge mutual support and reliability – our expectations of volunteers and volunteers' expectations of our organisation.
- acknowledge and value the individual skills, knowledge and experience that each volunteer brings to our organisation;

Relevant Guidance and Law

This policy was created with reference to [Health and Safety Executive Guidance](#) and relevant Health and Safety Law including the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA); the Equality Act 2010, the Children Act 1989, and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

While volunteers have no employment rights such as paid sickness and holidays, they are covered by the organisation's rules on (for example) health and safety, safeguarding, complaints, and equal opportunities and should ensure that they are aware of and follow these policies.

Coordination of Volunteering

All volunteers will have a nominated paid member of staff or a volunteer from the Management Committee to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out their role effectively.

'Volunteer coordination' will be explicitly mentioned in all relevant paid job descriptions within our organisation.

The person with overall responsibility for the development of volunteering within our organisation is the Centre Manager. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of our volunteers.

Recruitment

Depending on the duties they wish to help with, volunteers may be asked to complete a Volunteer Application, with references, and to sign an Agreement (see Appendix 1). The need for a signed agreement shall be at the discretion of WOCA.

Service at the Discretion of the Organisation

The organisation accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at its sole discretion. Volunteers agree that the organisation may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationship. If a volunteer wishes to end their relationship with the organisation they should inform the Centre Manager as soon as possible.

Induction, Training, and Support

- Each volunteer will receive information, written and verbal about our organisation: the work we do, our structure and key policies and procedures such as health and safety, equal opportunities, safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection. This will include any personal information held by us relating to the volunteer
- Each volunteer will receive information about the volunteer's role and the named manager/supervisor
- The named manager/supervisor will discuss with the volunteer any other training needs
- Each volunteer will act as a volunteer on a trial basis of three months to ensure that we and each volunteer is happy with the role
- We will encourage volunteers to develop and build on existing skills and knowledge through sharing good practice and learning and training opportunities. The designated person mentioned above will be responsible for ensuring that where possible relevant training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend the identified relevant training
- Training in the management of volunteers will be provided for those staff with direct responsibility for volunteers

Conflicts of Interest

Any volunteer, who has a conflict of interest with any activity or programme of the organisation, whether personal, philosophical, or financial, must declare this to the Centre Manager.

Representation of the Organisation

Prior to any action or statement that might significantly affect or obligate WOCA, volunteers should seek consultation and approval from appropriate staff. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, lobbying efforts with other organisations, collaborations or joint initiatives, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are not authorised to act as representatives of the organisation unless this is explicitly stated.

Confidentiality and the Data Protection Act 1998

The organisation is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a member of staff, volunteer, service users or other person, or involves the overall business of the organisation.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

In line with WOCA's Safeguarding Policy, as appropriate for the protection of service users, volunteers in certain roles may be asked to submit to a criminal record check. Volunteers who do not agree to the background check may be refused the role.

Lines of Communication

Volunteers should be included in and have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to the work assignments. Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions that would substantially affect the performance of their duties.

Ending the Agreement

The organisation may find it necessary to end this agreement if the volunteer commits any of the following:

- gross misconduct or insubordination
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- theft of property or misuse of the organisation's equipment or materials
- abuse or mistreatment of service users or co-workers
- failure to abide by its policies and procedures
- failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance
- failure to perform assigned duties satisfactorily

Note - This list is not exhaustive.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Volunteers are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred while undertaking business for the organisation and they are encouraged to claim their expenses in order to ensure that the true cost is reflected in project accounts. Prior approval must be sought for any major expenditure, and receipts must always be submitted in support of claims.

Insurance

Personal liability and accident insurance is provided for all volunteers engaged in the organisation's business (excluding normal motor insurance). We do not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. In respect of motor vehicle insurance cover, volunteers are responsible for consulting with their own insurers regarding the extension to include volunteer work. They may be required to produce evidence of this cover.

Rights and Responsibilities

WOCA recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is and is not expected of them
- Have adequate support in their volunteering role
- Know what to do if anything goes wrong
- Be free from discrimination
- Have safe conditions for carrying out their volunteering activities
- Be insured
- Receive relevant out of pocket expenses
- Receive an induction programme and training opportunities

We expect volunteers to:

- Be reliable and honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Comply with our policies and procedures
- Make the most of training and support opportunities
- Carry out their volunteering tasks as agreed and in a way that reflects our values and aims
- Respect the work of our organisation and not bring it into disrepute

Appendices

1. Volunteering Agreement
2. Volunteer Assessment Form