



# Volunteers Handbook



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## Introduction

Thank you for offering to give some of your time and experience to assist us. We rely on volunteers to help achieve our objectives.

We provide equal opportunities, are committed to the principle of equality and we will not condone any unlawful discriminatory act or attitude. We will apply policies that are fair, equitable and consistent with skills and abilities. Volunteers can assist by supporting us in implementing these policies to ensure equality of opportunity.

Please study this handbook carefully. It contains some simple rules and helpful information.

# General Rules and Procedures

## CHANGES IN PERSONAL DETAILS

We may need to contact you in emergency so please notify us of any change of address, emergency contact etc

## STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA

Volunteers must not make any statement to reporters from newspapers, radio, television etc. in respect of our organisation. Any enquiries should be directed to your Manager.

## VOLUNTEERS' PROPERTY

No liability is accepted for any loss of, or damage to property. You are advised not to take any personal items of value to where you volunteer or to leave any items overnight, and to use lockers where provided e.g. at our shops.

## STANDARDS OF DRESS

You may come into contact with customers and members of the public. It is important that you present an acceptable image in terms of appearance and standards of dress. You should wear clothes appropriate to your tasks, and they should be kept clean and tidy at all times.

## TIME COMMITMENT

If you are unable to attend at any of the times when you have arranged to help us, due to ill health or other commitments, please let your Manager know as soon as possible as we need to make arrangements for cover.

## EXPENSES

You are entitled to claim the following expenses incurred during volunteering with us:

- Travel to and from home to the place of volunteering.
- Travel costs incurred during volunteering.
- Meal costs – can be provided if you volunteer for 6 hours or over in a session..

Expenses must be claimed on an expense claim form and be supported by receipts, ticket stubs or other evidence wherever practicable. We only reimburse actual expenses incurred.

## G) STATE BENEFITS

Voluntary work may affect your eligibility for state benefits. We advise you check this with the appropriate agencies.

## RECORD CHECKS

Because this position may involve the care of vulnerable adults, volunteering is also dependant on the following:

- Your written consent to obtaining a standard/enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure & Barring Service.
- Such disclosure being acceptable to us.
- Proof of identity – Birth and or marriage certificate (where appropriate), passport or a new style driving licence.
- Satisfactory written references.

## INSURANCE

During your time with us you are covered under our insurance policies.

## HOUSEKEEPING

All areas must be kept clean and tidy at all times.

## TELEPHONE CALLS/ MOBILE PHONES

Incoming personal telephone calls are allowed only in the case of emergency. Outgoing calls can be made with the permission of your Manager. Personal mobile phones should be switched off during your time volunteering.

## BUYING OR SELLING OF GOODS

You are not allowed to buy or sell goods on your own behalf on our premises or during your agreed hours.

## COLLECTIONS

Collections on our premises are only allowed with our permission. If you wish to obtain sponsorship, conduct raffles, request donations etc. for a good cause, please discuss this with your Manager.

## TRAINING

We only provide the training necessary for the tasks you have volunteered for and any further volunteering activities it is agreed you can undertake.

## PROBLEMS

Should you have any problems related to your treatment by us, our employees, other volunteers or the people we serve, please raise these with your Manager who will attempt to resolve the issue. If you are unhappy with the outcome you may raise the issue with your Manager's superior.

## Breaches of the Required Standards

Volunteers are expected to behave responsibly while with us. Normally we would bring any difficulties to your attention informally. However, the following list provides examples of offences, which are normally regarded as breaches of the required standards.

- Unsatisfactory attendance
- Poor timekeeping
- Rudeness to customers, service users, staff or volunteers
- Failure to meet the organisations standards as outlined in the manuals and procedures provided.
- Refusal to carry out a reasonable request from the manager
- Errors e.g. till operating errors incurring financial loss and/or damage to the company's reputation.
- Behaviour or action, which endangers the Health or Safety of staff, volunteers or members of the public.

The list of examples is not exhaustive or exclusive and there may be many other issues which Mind in Croydon deems not to be of the required standard. Mind in Croydon reserves the right to make a judgement on these and take appropriate action. When instances occur, the action taken will depend on the severity of the offence but may result in us refusing any further voluntary assistance from you. Queries on this matter should be referred to your Manager.

### Serious breaches of the Required Standards

The following list provides examples of offences, which are normally regarded as serious breaches of the Required Standards

- Fraud, deliberate falsification of records, theft or unauthorised possession of money or property, whether belonging to us or any of our stakeholders.
- Possession, supply or use of illicit drugs
- Grossly indecent or immoral behaviour, deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination or serious acts of harassment.
- Dangerous behaviour, fighting or physical assault on another person.
- Deliberate damage to the organisations property, or any property on the premises.
- Serious incapacity or poor performance caused by intoxicants e.g. alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs.

- Serious act of insubordination (refusing to carry out reasonable request)
- Serious breaches of health and safety rules
- Maltreatment of service user
- Failure to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse of a service user by anyone connected to Mind In Croydon.
- Smoking anywhere on Mind premises/land.
- Convictions for any offence which might affect your suitability for the volunteering duties you are involved in.
- Befriending a client and offering to assist them at home, or to meet in the community without discussing with your manager.
- Giving out personal emails, phone numbers, address etc.
- Any other we may have which we feel may be detrimental to our operations

The list of examples is not exhaustive or exclusive. After investigation the volunteer or member of staff may be asked to leave and Mind in Croydon reserves the right to decide on this matter.

If you find that anyone, including a member of staff or volunteer, is behaving in a way that is likely to bring the charity into disrepute or cause financial loss, you should inform your manager immediately.

Remember that your relationship with clients needs to be strictly professional, if in doubt about anything speak to a member of staff.

# Security

## RIGHTS OF SEARCH

- We have the right to carry out searches of volunteers and their property (including vehicles) whilst they are on our premises or business. These searches are random and do not imply suspicion in relation to any individual concerned.
- If you should be required to submit to a search, you will, if practicable, be entitled to be accompanied by a third party to be selected from someone who is on the premises at the time. This right also applies at the time that any further questioning takes place.
- You may be asked to remove the contents of your pockets, bags, vehicles, etc.
- Whilst you have the right to refuse to be searched, refusal by you to agree to being searched could result in us refusing to accept any further voluntary assistance from you.
- We reserve the right to call in the police at any stage.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that:-

- is or has been acquired by you during, or in the course of your engagement, or has otherwise been acquired by you in confidence,
- relates particularly to our business, or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort, and
- has not been made public by, or with our authority, shall be confidential, and (save in the course of our business or as required by law) you shall not at any time, whether before or after the termination of your engagement, disclose such information to any person without our prior written consent.
- You are to exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information, and shall at the time of termination of your engagement with us, or at any other time upon demand, return to us any such material in your possession.

## USE OF COMPUTER EQUIPMENT.

In order to control the use of the organisation's computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply:

- the introduction of new software must be checked and authorised. You cannot introduce new software of any kind without approval from your Manager.
- only authorised individuals will have access to our computer equipment.
- only authorised software may be used on the organisation's computer equipment.
- only software that is used for business applications may be used.
- you may not bring software onto or remove it from the our premises without prior authorisation from your Manager.
- unauthorised access to the computer facility may result in termination of
- your relationship with us.
- unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will
- result in us refusing to accept any further assistance from you.

## VIRUS PROTECTION PROCEDURES

In order to prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system the following must be observed:

- unauthorised software including public domain software, magazine cover
- disks/CDs or Internet/World Wide Web downloads must not be used.
- all software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.



## E-MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

### Internet

Where appropriate, duly authorised volunteers may make use of the Internet as part of their duties. You may only release information via the internet with the prior agreement of your Manager. The use of the internet to access and/or distribute any kind of material which is offensive or unrelated to your tasks will result in termination of your relationship with us.

### E-Mail

You may only use the e-mail system with the prior approval of your Manager and unauthorised use may result in termination of your relationship with us.

Volunteers using the e-mail system should observe the following points:

- they comply with our communication standards (your Manager will advise you of these).
- e-mail messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant.
- e-mail should not be used as a substitute for face to face communication or telephone contact. Flame mails (i.e. e-mails that are abusive) must not be sent. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding.
- if e-mail is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality.
- offers or contracts transmitted by e-mail are as legally binding on the organisation as those sent on paper.

We will not tolerate the use of the e-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes including:

- any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment.
- personal use (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters).
- on-line gambling.
- accessing or transmitting pornography.
- transmitting copyright information and/or any software to the user.
- posting confidential information about other volunteers, workers, employees, the organisation or its customers or suppliers.

# Health, Safety, welfare and Hygiene

## SAFETY

- Your Manager will advise you of the health and safety requirements and any hazards associated with your responsibilities.
- You must not take any action that could threaten the health or safety of yourself, other volunteers, workers, employees, customers or members of the public.
- You should report all accidents and injuries sustained while volunteering, no matter how minor, in the accident book. Your Manager will advise where this is kept.

## REST ROOM, REFRESHMENT MAKING FACILITIES/VENDING MACHINE

We provide a rest room and refreshment making facilities. Please keep these facilities clean and tidy.

## SMOKING POLICY

Our policy of not smoking other than in designated areas on our sites must be observed at all times.

## ALCOHOL & DRUGS POLICY

- We have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety and welfare of volunteers, employees, workers and, similarly, you have a responsibility to yourself and your colleagues. The use of alcohol and drugs may impair the safe and efficient running of the business/service and/or the health and safety of our volunteers, workers, employees and other parties.
- If, during volunteering with us, your performance or behaviour are affected as a result of alcohol or drugs, or we believe you have been involved in any drug related action/offence, you may be subject to further action and, dependent on the circumstances, this may lead to termination of your relationship with us.

## LOST PROPERTY

Articles of lost property should be handed to your Manager who will retain them whilst attempts are made to discover the owner.

## PARKING

Please speak to your Manager about parking arrangements as restrictions apply. No liability is accepted for damage to private vehicles, however caused.

## HYGIENE

- Any exposed cut or burn must be covered with a first-aid dressing.
- If you are suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness such as rubella or hepatitis you must not report for volunteering without clearance from your own doctor.
- Contact with any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease must be reported before commencing voluntary work.

## HYGIENE FOR FOOD HANDLERS

- You must wash your hands immediately before commencing volunteering and after using the toilet.
- Any cut or burn on the hand or arm must be covered with an approved visible dressing.
- Head coverings and overalls/uniforms, where provided, must be worn at all times.
- If you are suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness, or have a bowel disorder, boils, skin or mouth infection, you must not report for volunteering without clearance from your own doctor.
- Contact with any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease must be reported and you must have clearance from your own doctor before returning to volunteering.
- You must report to your Manager before returning to volunteering.



# Equal Opportunities Policy

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

- We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and equality of opportunity is a feature of our practices and procedures. Breaches of this policy will lead to investigation and, if appropriate, further action.
- The aim of the policy is to ensure that volunteers are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or disability.
- We will ensure that the policy is circulated to any agencies responsible for our recruitment and a copy of the policy will be made available for all volunteers. Our main Equal Opportunities, Equality & Diversity Policy is available on our website.
- We will maintain a neutral environment in which no volunteer feels under threat or intimidated.

## SELECTION

- We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
- We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of voluntary opportunities.
- We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.
- All those who ask to volunteer for us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on the contribution they can make.
- All those involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to volunteering requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
- Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the volunteering activity and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
- We will not disqualify any volunteer because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the volunteering activity.

# Discriminatory/Harassment Complaints Policy and Procedure

## INTRODUCTION

- We recognise that personal harassment, which may or may not be associated with discrimination, can occur.
- Personal harassment takes many forms and people may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment. Personal harassment is unwanted behaviour towards an individual by another person or persons. Examples of harassment include:
  - insensitive jokes and pranks.
  - lewd or abusive comments about appearance.
  - deliberate exclusion from conversations.
  - displaying abusive or offensive writing or material.
  - unwelcome touching.
  - abusive, threatening or insulting words or behaviour.

These examples are not exhaustive and action, at the appropriate level, will be taken against volunteers, workers or our own employees committing any form of personal harassment.

## POLICY

We deplore all forms of unlawful discrimination and personal harassment and seek to ensure that the environment is sympathetic to the volunteers we use.

## COMPLAINING ABOUT DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT

### Informal complaint

We recognise that complaints of discrimination, personal harassment and particularly of sexual harassment can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through your Manager. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues with a senior employee of our organisation, whether or not that person has responsibility for you.

If you are the victim of minor discrimination or harassment you should make it clear to the discriminator/harasser, on an informal basis, that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the discriminator/harasser, and a senior employee of our company.

### Formal complaint

Where the informal approach fails or if the discrimination/harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of a senior employee of our company as a formal written complaint and again the person noted above can assist you in this. If possible, you should keep notes of the harassment so that the written complaint can include:-

- the name of the alleged discriminator/harasser.
- the nature of the alleged discrimination/harassment.
- the dates and times when the alleged discrimination/harassment occurred.
- the names of any witnesses.
- any action already taken by you to stop the alleged discrimination/harassment.

The person dealing with the complaint will carry out a thorough investigation in accordance with our procedures. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence.

When the investigation has been concluded, a draft report of the findings and of the investigator's recommended course of action will be sent, in writing, to you and to the alleged discriminator/harasser. If you or the alleged discriminator/harasser are dissatisfied with the draft report this should be raised with the investigator within five working days of

receiving the draft. Any points of concern will be considered.

The investigator will decide whether or not the issue should be handled via our disciplinary procedures if an employee is involved.

Once the process has been completed, whether it takes report form only or requires a disciplinary sanction, a final report in writing will be sent to you and the alleged discriminator/harasser.

### GENERAL NOTES

- If the report concludes that the allegation is well founded, the discriminator/harasser may, at our discretion (if an employee) be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedures. Should the discriminator/harasser be a volunteer, similarly fair procedures will be adopted before any decision about continuation of their engagement, or any other measure such as a reprimand, is taken.
- If you bring a complaint of harassment you will not be victimised for having brought the complaint. However if the report concludes that the complaint is untrue and has been brought with malicious intent we will, subject to a fair procedure, no longer accept any further voluntary assistance from you.



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