

## Ashford Volunteer Centre Volunteer management policy

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## Why we have a policy

Ashford Volunteer Centre's vision is to have a society where everyone who wants to volunteer can do so in order to create a stronger community. Volunteers are integral to the Centre. Without their help, we would not be able to sustain such valuable services as our Community Car Scheme, befriending service and Timebanking system. Thanks to the hours, energy and commitment given by our volunteers, hundreds of people in the borough are able to lead more fulfilling lives.

We have this policy to formally recognise the importance of volunteers in delivering our services. It outlines the basic principles of volunteering at the Centre and has been written for all volunteers who have accepted a role with us; it also serves as a reference for staff and trustees. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it upholds our commitment to best practice volunteer management and our commitment to giving volunteers the opportunity to enjoy a rewarding experience that is valued by all.

## What is volunteering?

Volunteers are people who freely give their time, experience, skills and knowledge to support the work of Ashford Volunteer Centre. There is no pay involved, nor any of the obligations associated with paid employment, such as a contract, although for most roles we do ask for a regular commitment. The hours and days typically required for each role will be discussed and agreed between the volunteer and the Centre on acceptance of the position. The key roles we have at Ashford Volunteer Centre are...



Volunteer drivers



Volunteer call handlers in the transport office



Volunteer befrienders



Volunteer co-ordinators for the Timebank



We also take on volunteers in an ad-hoc capacity to assist with basic building maintenance and DIY

Volunteers are not intended to replace paid staff and they are considered complementary to the Centre's core team. As such, the volunteer or Ashford Volunteer Centre can at any time bring the volunteer role to an end; in such cases we would expect either party to communicate this as swiftly as possible. There is no probation period for volunteers, but there will be close supervision during the first few weeks to ensure both the individual and Ashford Volunteer Centre are happy with how things are going.

## Getting started – our recruitment and induction process

We believe that everyone in the community has something to offer, and we like to encourage and make use of the unique set of skills each individual has. We welcome volunteer applications from *all* members of the community, as laid out in our Equality and Diversity Policy, and we try to promote vacancies in a way that is accessible to all. We have no upper age limit to volunteering, but because of the nature of our work we do have a minimum age of 18.

### What's involved

We always conduct an informal, face-to-face interview with those interested in volunteering, which helps identify which roles might be suitable for them. It also ensures those wanting to volunteer for a particular project are suited to the role in question. Volunteers recruited by the Centre are chosen on merit and the ability to carry out the tasks required. If an applicant is not considered suitable, we will suggest other opportunities which may be more appropriate.

In addition to the interview we request two references, one personal, one professional. We may also ask volunteers to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal record) check if their tasks involve activities with vulnerable people. Any information about a person that is not relevant to their role is disregarded during the recruitment process.

### Supporting our volunteers in the first few weeks

Once a volunteer is successful with their application, they will be given a full induction at the Centre. This will include an overview of the purpose and mission of Ashford Volunteer Centre; an organisational chart which identifies all staff, trustees and their roles; an orientation tour of the building; guidance on how to claim expenses; and the communication of all office policies and procedures. This information is also contained in the role-specific handbooks we provide. Volunteers will then receive full training from their Volunteer Services Coordinator and from other volunteers in order for them to perform their tasks with confidence.

### Demonstrating the difference our volunteers make

Our volunteers appreciate regular and timely feedback on the impact they are having, and as our services are externally funded we also have an obligation to report this impact to our funders. We do this by communicating the feedback collected from volunteers and clients in our annual customer surveys, plus we measure simple outputs such as how many volunteers have helped the Centre over the year and how many clients have been helped. We also showcase the very real difference our volunteers make by displaying stories and testimonials around the building, by issuing press releases, and by sharing good news stories with everyone our staff and trustees come in to contact with!

## Other practicalities

### Expenses



We do not expect our volunteers to be out of pocket by fulfilling their roles, so we will cover all reasonable travel costs in getting to and from the place of volunteering. The process of claiming expenses will be explained to volunteers at their induction.

### Confidentiality and the protection of data



We commit to protecting volunteers' personal data in line with our Data Protection Policy, which is also in accordance with how we treat the personal data of our paid staff. Similarly, we expect our volunteers to keep confidential any personal or sensitive information they might encounter while volunteering. This includes information about other volunteers, clients, staff, trustees or sensitive information about the Centre.

### Insurance



Ashford Volunteer Centre's Public Liability and Employers' Liability insurances cover all volunteers to perform the duties outlined in their role descriptions and to carry out activities on behalf of the Centre. Volunteers would not be covered in the event of a claim if they were found in breach of their role responsibilities.

### Disputes and complaints



It is important that volunteers inform us if there is anything they are unhappy or concerned about, and that they speak to their Volunteer Services Coordinator or other member of staff at the earliest opportunity. We will make every reasonable effort to act promptly and amicably to resolve any difficulties. If the situation necessitates a more formal complaint, the volunteer must follow the Centre's Complaints Policy.

### Disciplinary action and reasons for dismissal



As with our paid staff, there are certain instances when disciplinary action or even dismissal may be required. Any disciplinary action would be addressed by the Volunteer Services Coordinator, a senior member of staff or trustee. Possible grounds for dismissal may include – but are not limited to – gross misconduct or insubordination; misuse of alcohol or drugs; theft; abuse or mistreatment of others; failing to follow the Centre's policies or procedures or to perform volunteer tasks adequately.

### Moving on



We understand that people's situations and aspirations change and that their volunteering role may no longer be viable, enjoyable or suitable for them. Volunteers are free to step down from their roles at any time, but we do appreciate being given as much notice as possible in such circumstances.

## Our commitment to our volunteers

Our volunteers contribute in many different ways, and everyone's contribution is unique. We value the commitment each person gives to the Centre and will always try to find the most appropriate role for them, and then encourage, support and develop them. We take our responsibilities to our volunteers seriously, and commit to the following principles...

### **Welcoming everyone**

We are all committed to equal opportunities and believe that volunteering should be open to all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs or criminal history (providing that does not create a risk to vulnerable people).

### **The importance of 'right fit'**

Our informal but deliberate recruitment process aims to identify the most suitable, enjoyable roles for our volunteers, and we provide concise role descriptions which clarify the tasks our volunteers carry out.

### **Providing sufficient training and support**

All volunteers will have a Volunteer Services Coordinator as their first point of contact. That staff member will offer guidance and advice so that the volunteer can carry out the duties of their role and see how they are developing. As we are a small team, volunteers are also welcome to speak to any other member of staff about any concerns or ambitions they may have.

### **Recognising our volunteers' efforts**

We aim to be as inclusive as possible, and treat all of our volunteers as partners. As such, they will be invited to attend events, and will have the opportunity to participate in training which may be of interest to them. We also arrange regular social events for volunteers so they can meet other volunteers, the staff and trustees, and most importantly be thanked for their contribution.

### **Mutual respect**

Volunteers have the right to be treated as equal co-workers, with equal respect.

### **Keeping people in the loop**

A lot goes on at Ashford Volunteer Centre, so we try to keep volunteers updated with such things as changes in the organisations who share our building, changes in staff, trustees and fellow volunteers, and details of new projects.

### **Safety and comfort**

We will always ensure volunteers are familiar with our Health and Safety Policy, that they know who to approach as first-aiders, and that they are aware of the building's evacuation procedure. We will also provide safeguarding training when relevant. Within the office, volunteers can expect a comfortable, accessible environment with equipment that is fit for purpose, and we will try to be amenable to requests which might make a volunteer's duties more comfortable. We also like to keep our volunteers happy with a constant supply of tea, coffee and biscuits in the office!

### **Keeping it fun**

We like to keep things informal at the Centre and we take every opportunity to make people smile.

## *Our volunteers' commitment to us*

In return, we hope our volunteers will strive to offer the best of themselves while volunteering at the Centre. This includes...

### **Being reliable**

If circumstances change which may affect an individual's ability to volunteer or their agreed times for volunteering, we would like to be informed of this at the earliest opportunity.

### **Working with others**

We expect our volunteers to always be considerate of, and helpful to, fellow volunteers, staff members, our clients and members of the public.

### **Sticking to the rules**

Although we encourage an informal atmosphere we take our responsibilities to our volunteers, clients and staff seriously, so we expect all volunteers to have understood our policies, practices and role responsibilities, and operate within those guidelines. We also expect them to act within the law.

### **Upholding the reputation of Ashford Volunteer Centre**

All of our volunteer roles involve contact with clients and the public. In this respect we expect volunteers to consider their actions, behaviours and use of social media in the context of, and in connection with, Ashford Volunteer Centre.

### **Sharing our values**

Ashford Volunteer Centre's values are passion, pride, humility, honesty and integrity – things we strive to express in all that we do, and which we hope our volunteers will express too.

### **Maintaining confidentiality**

In their roles, volunteers may be exposed to sensitive information: we expect them to respect client and colleague confidentiality at all times unless they believe a person may be at risk of harm if certain information is not shared.

### **Having fun**

Volunteering is just that – voluntary! We hope our volunteers embrace the lively and sometimes unconventional nature of Ashford Volunteer Centre and enjoy their role here. If at any time they feel their tasks are becoming a chore we want to know so that we can help them find something more fulfilling.

## **Supporting documents and further reading**

Volunteer handbooks and role descriptions

Complaints Policy

Environmental Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Expenses and Gift Policy

Data Protection Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Lone Working Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Social Media Policy for Volunteers