

Title: **Volunteer Policy and Agreement**
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Aims and Objectives

Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind recognise that the volunteer's time and skills are an important resource without which the organisation could not offer as comprehensive a service to the public. The organisation hopes volunteers find the time spent volunteering a valuable and stimulating experience. This policy alongside other policies and the code of conduct is intended to provide an understanding of the volunteer role in the organisation.

Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind consider volunteering to be a mutually beneficial arrangement that is both enjoyable and rewarding for both parties. Volunteers for Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind are unpaid and do not receive any material reward for their work.

There is no contract of employment between the volunteer and Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind so neither party are liable with regards to employment law. Volunteers are not obliged to carry out any tasks offered, nor are volunteers obliged to attend on any particular day or at any particular time. However, in the interests of the organisation, volunteers are required to make a commitment to agreed volunteering hours to support in the consistency of service delivery. Equally, Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind are not obliged to provide work at any time but will endeavour to inform volunteers of availability of work at the earliest opportunity.

Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind's mission statement "is to be an organisation of excellence with an ever changing and diverse range of activities and services that promotes psychological and physical well being, stimulates recovery and leads to social inclusion within mainstream society". All the volunteering roles work to this mission statement, assisting people in fostering a sense of independence to improve their own mental health and well being.

The aim of this policy is to provide:

- organisational commitment and value to volunteers
- fair and consistent treatment of volunteers
- clarity of roles and responsibilities for both the volunteer and organisation
- a framework within which all volunteers operate

Scope

This policy is relevant to all volunteers, except volunteer executive committee members who have their own set of executive committee member policies.

Related policies

- Code of conduct
- Clothing Policy
- Benefits & Allowances
- Health and Safety
- Disclosure & Barring (where applicable)
- Confidentiality
- Equality & Diversity
- Safeguarding
- Communication
- Relevant services policies
- Payment of clinical supervision (for qualified counsellors only)

Legal Context

The Health and Safety Act, Care Standards Act (relating to issues of DBS disclosure), the Data Protection Act and relevant benefit and tax law have been taken into account within this policy.

The Policy

Anyone aged 16 (18 for volunteers who will lone work with individuals as part of their role) and over can apply to be a volunteer with Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind.

Recruitment

There are a number of different volunteering roles in the organisation.

The organisation's volunteering roles are advertised on the website, in our monthly well-being newsletter, as well as at local Volunteer Centres. The organisation also undertakes targeted advertising in various locations, depending on the role, taking account of equal opportunities and diversity policies. Before completing an application form, potential applicants are welcome to contact the organisation and discuss their individual needs as well as find out about the organisation's requirements. This is an informal discussion and does not constitute part of the recruitment process.

All volunteering roles require an application form to be completed. There is a generic application form for all roles. A role description for each role accompanies the application form. Applications will be checked and applicants will be assessed on their suitability for the volunteer role they have applied; where an individual applies for a number of roles within the organisation they will be assessed on their suitability for each role.

Applicants will be contacted to inform if they have been successful in gaining an interview; interviews may take place either one-to-one or in a group. Questions within the interview will be based on the role which is being applied for and a minimum of two staff members from the organisation will conduct the interview. In some instances, where necessary for the role, there will be additional requirements during the recruitment process, this may include a practical assessment within the interview.

It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure they fully understand the recruitment process for the role they are applying. Additional information should be made available via the appropriate service policy for any additional recruitment requirements.

If successful, two references asked for at application stage will be taken up. The organisation accepts references from friends and family as well as work or other volunteering roles. Due to the nature of services offered by the organisation, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be required, where appropriate, prior to a volunteer doing any lone work with the organisation. Any expenses related to this are covered by the organisation.

With regards to dual relationships within the organisation, Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind believe it is important to recognise the feelings that may be generated within a therapeutic relationship and the possible need for a period of time to pass for these to settle down again. Therefore Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind do not allow individuals accessing services within the organisation, excluding using the café, to volunteer whilst accessing this service.

If an individual has come to the end of receiving a service from us and wishes to become a volunteer, then each request shall be assessed on individual merit. The views of the worker will be taken into account, as well as what role has been applied for.

In order to maintain boundaries there will always be a 12 month "cooling off" period before a client can apply to be a volunteer. There may be times when clients transition into volunteering as part of a particular project, this will be done via a 'Boundary Reforming Agreement' being implemented and both the client and staff reform the relationship under the new roles. For further guidance please see Code of Conduct.

Induction

Following a successful interview, an induction process must be followed with all new volunteers. This will include a Volunteer Human Resource Induction, with the relevant staff member and Organisational Core Induction Training, delivered by the Training Directorate. Volunteer HR induction will include:

- This Volunteer Policy and Volunteer Agreement
- Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Induction Checklist and Handbook
- Access to other relevant policies and procedures

Organisational Core Induction Training will include:

- The role of volunteers within organisation
- Introduction to relevant staff members
- Confidentiality policy
- Supervision policy
- Importance of boundaries
- Safeguarding policy
- Essential day to day procedures and expectations
- Details of support and risk procedures
- Details of ongoing training requirements including mandatory training i.e. safeguarding
- Specific training needs for specific volunteers roles and how to access these
- Any other information as appropriate

It is essential that all new volunteers have access to the induction process. Volunteers who are successful and complete the Volunteer HR Induction can start their volunteer role but will need to confirm they are booked to attend the Organisational Core Induction Training.

Failure to complete the full induction process, within a reasonable time of joining the organisation, could place your volunteer role with the organisation at risk.

Equality and diversity

The organisation is firmly committed to equality and diversity. The organisation has much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, with diversity making the organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute, is central. The organisation regularly evaluates and monitors equality and diversity issues.

Data Storage

Each volunteer will have a paper file, stored in a lockable filing cabinet. The file contains basic information on each volunteer. Each file contains a front sheet, an application form, interview details, references, DBS details (where applicable), contact and support/supervisory notes, action plans, copies of letters sent to volunteer and emergency contact information, and any other relevant information relating to volunteer role. Volunteers are able to see their own file on request.

NB: Emergency contact information is requested to ensure we can appropriately respond and contact someone in the event of an emergency during your volunteering. It is up to the volunteer how much information they provide for their emergency contact.

Volunteer records are kept for 2 years from the date of closure, in line with DPA guidelines. All volunteer contact details etc. will also be inputted onto our centralised computerised database (Civi), which has monitored access by staff and other volunteers.

Expenses

The organisation wants to ensure barriers to volunteering are minimised. The organisation encourages volunteers to claim the appropriate expenses for any volunteer work carried out within the organisation.

Full details of volunteer expenses can be found in our Benefits and Allowances Policy.

Support

Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind is committed to supporting the development of volunteers' skills and expertise and providing a safe and trusting environment to learn.

All volunteers within the organisation will have access to an appropriate member of staff for day to day support. Volunteers are encouraged to become familiar with the staff member(s) responsible for the area they volunteer in so they know where to access support when needed.

In the event that the appropriate staff member for a service is unavailable for support, a volunteer is able to seek support from any other member of staff within the organisation.

Supervision

Volunteers are discouraged from 'taking issues home' both in the interest of maintaining good wellbeing for our volunteers and also in the interest of adhering to our confidentiality policy.

Whilst volunteering within the organisation it is important that volunteers have access to regular supervision meetings with the appropriate staff member; it is during these meetings that both volunteers and staff can raise any issues and have these addressed appropriately.

Where volunteer roles include clinical client work supervision meetings will be used to explore client and volunteer relationships, good practice with clients and any difficult situations/disclosures.

It is expected that volunteers will attend supervision regularly, regardless of the area in which you volunteer in the organisation there will be a minimum requirement of monthly supervision. Please see Supervision policy for further guidance.

Training

Ongoing training is available to volunteers within the organisation, in addition to training required for their role. Details of available training are sent out electronically to all volunteers on a monthly basis and can also be accessed via the Training Directorate

If it is identified that volunteers have a specific learning need relating to their volunteer role, it should be discussed with the appropriate staff member and the volunteer should be supported in accessing this training. Should a volunteer request access to training which is outside of their current volunteer role remit this will be discussed with the appropriate staff member and decisions made about access to further training will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The organisation is keen for volunteers to develop their skills and abilities and is happy for volunteers to take on additional volunteering roles within the centre. If a volunteer wishes to take on additional responsibilities via another volunteer role within the organisation this should be discussed with the appropriate staff member for their current volunteer role first.

There may be additional recruitment processes to follow for volunteers wishing to access more than one role within their organisation and individuals must discuss this with the appropriate service manager.

The organisation is keen to know how the volunteering role has helped people develop therefore, the organisation will be available for every volunteer, once a year, for an annual Personal Development Review on a one-to-one basis. Volunteers are responsible for requesting this meeting with the appropriate staff member.

Communication

Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind will endeavour to inform and communicate with volunteers about changes within the organisation in an open and honest way. We will ensure that communication methods used are inclusive and accessible so all volunteers have access to the information regardless of their individual needs. Information is generally disseminated via newsletters, emails, notice boards, letters etc. but where we are able we will endeavour to communicate issues which might impact upon volunteers face-to-face.

As the organisation agrees to communicate openly and honestly with volunteers it is also the expectation that volunteers will communicate in this way also, to staff members, other colleagues and members of the public accessing our services.

For specific volunteer roles it may be required for volunteers to access additional training so they are able to appropriately communicate through their role.

Volunteers are asked to consider the impact upon the organisation due to any communication either via email, telephone, social media or face-to-face contact. Volunteers are responsible for adhering to and understanding the Communication Policy.

Confidentiality

The organisation requires an explicit confidentiality policy, which all workers, including volunteers, paid staff and Executive Committee, are obliged to observe.

It is the responsibility of all volunteers and workers within the organisation to adhere to and understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality, in line with our policy, and also when it is appropriate to break confidentiality. Any individual who does not understand the confidentiality policy should seek additional support from the appropriate staff member and may need to access further training. Further details can be found in confidentiality policy.

Boundaries

To ensure the organisation, its staff, volunteers, any other workers and members of the public are within an environment which is safe, ethical and promoting wellbeing and independence, not fostering dependency, it is essential that professional boundaries are adhered to.

It is the responsibility of staff, volunteers and any other workers to ensure they understand how to maintain professional boundaries and to recognise when there may be an issue with these boundaries.

Below are a number of ways in which the organisation would expect a volunteer to maintain their boundaries, this list is not exhaustive and further guidance can be found in the code of conduct.

- If a volunteer knows a person that comes and accesses a service they are providing they must inform a member of staff to check it is appropriate to continue.
- Volunteers must not give out personal details to individuals accessing services whilst they are accessing services nor should they engage in any form of relationship without making this known to a member of staff.
- Volunteers must not engage in or encourage physical contact with individuals accessing services which may be considered inappropriate.
- Volunteers should not accept gifts of any kind from individuals accessing services; should accepting a gift be unavoidable this should be discussed with a member of staff.
- Volunteers should have an understanding of management of internal relationships & boundaries with other volunteers or staff members.

Should volunteers have any concerns about boundaries of individuals accessing services, staff members or other volunteers they should make this known to the appropriate staff member. Where there is a recognised issue with a volunteer and their boundaries additional training may be needed or their suitability of the volunteer role may need to be reviewed.

Health and safety

The organisation is committed to all aspects of health and safety for all volunteers and all other workers and ensuring a safe working environment, with everyone's assistance.

It is the responsibility of all volunteers and workers within the organisation to adhere to and understand the importance of maintaining health and safety.

Further details can be found within the Health and Safety Policy and Handbook.

Insurance

The organisation has valid public liability insurance which covers the duties undertaken by volunteers, as long as volunteers comply with this policy and all the requirements of the insurance policy. The insurance policy is available on request.

Break from volunteering

Volunteers, with agreement of their volunteer manager, are able to take up to three months break from volunteering with organisation. The organisation recognises that volunteers often have conflicting demands that result in them not being able to provide availability to the organisation for a period, while not wanting to cease volunteering with the organisation.

A three month break is allowed to ensure that volunteers are still up to date with current practice and to assist in managing the level of volunteer support for workers. The volunteer will not be required to be re-interviewed nor retrained to recommence volunteering within the period, should they feel able to carry out work to the same standard as before their break. Where volunteer roles have changed substantially during a volunteer break it may be appropriate to use the recruitment process to check volunteer suitability.

Where a break of more than three months is requested, there may be a possibility of recommencing volunteering subject to volunteer place availability and using the recruitment process.

Where volunteers take a break from volunteering, access to Benefits and Allowances and training within the organisation will also be suspended.

Resolving problems

The relationship between the organisation and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important the organisation is able to maintain its agreed service standards to people who use it and it is also important volunteers should enjoy making their contribution.

Where there is an issue raised either by the volunteer or a staff member overseeing a volunteer it is important that this be resolved on the lowest possible level, in a timely fashion by both parties meeting to discuss. Notes may be taken from this meeting but formal letters will not always be issued.

Should a volunteer be unsatisfied with the decision made following this meeting they are able to appeal this via the next managerial level of staff i.e. manager or senior manager. The meeting and decision made by the staff member overseeing volunteer will be reviewed; the line manager may choose to uphold this decision if in agreement or may request a further meeting. Should a further meeting be needed this will take place and a decision will be made. Notes may be taken from this meeting but formal letters may not always be issued.

Should a volunteer still be unsatisfied with the decision made following this meeting they are able to make a final appeal to the appropriate Director. All previous meetings regarding volunteer issue will be reviewed; the director may choose to uphold all previous decisions made if in agreement or may request a further meeting. Should a further meeting be needed this will take place and a decision made. Notes will be taken from this meeting and a formal letter will be issued with the decision made. This decision is final.

Should a volunteer still be unsatisfied, therefore the issue has not been resolved, it may be appropriate to review the volunteer's suitability within the organisation. This could result in the volunteer being asked not to continue volunteering with the organisation.

Exit Arrangements

A volunteer may choose to withdraw from volunteering at any point and is not required to give any notice period, or explanation for their decision. However in the interest of the organisation, the volunteer is requested to inform the organisation promptly of any such decision so consideration can be given to the impact upon organisational service delivery, particularly where volunteers have been working with clients over a period of time it may be appropriate for volunteers to try and finish with clients before leaving the organisation.

The organisation values the contribution made by all volunteers and consequently endeavours to treat all volunteers fairly, consistently and reasonably. The organisation will try and listen to any concerns volunteers may have. However the relationship is not an employment relationship and volunteers do not have the same legal rights as employees.

To this effect, at any point a volunteer may be asked to leave at the discretion of the organisation without any notice. This decision is final. Prior to this decision, the organisation may offer the volunteer an opportunity to discuss the situation as detailed in the 'resolving problems' section of this policy. Once a volunteer has left the organisation they are not entitled to use the 'resolving problems' process and any issues should be raised in accordance with the public Complaints Policy.

References

Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind is able to provide a reference for volunteer regarding the length of service, confirmation of the volunteer role and brief details regarding the role undertaken at the centre within 12 months of the volunteering closure date. Alternatively the organisation can provide volunteers with a reference upon leaving the organisation in a PDF format so that they use this for future applications. Any reference given will be factual, truthful and will specify the Line Manager's opinion only.

Appendix 1 Volunteer Agreement

This volunteer agreement describes the arrangement between Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind and you. We wish to assure you of our appreciation of your volunteering with us and will do the best we can to make your volunteer experience with us enjoyable and rewarding.

Part 1: the organisation

Your role as a volunteer is as a _____ and starts on _____.

The details of the role are found on the role description given to you.

You can expect Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind to provide the following:

1. Induction

- To provide a thorough induction on the work of Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind.
- A HR Induction covering relevant health and safety policy & procedures, an explanation of this policy, explanation of the code of conduct and any other policies explained.
- An Operational Core Training Induction covering expectations whilst volunteering with us, appropriate working practices including confidentiality & boundaries, explanation of your role as a volunteer, day to day work explained, support available and any other relevant information.

2. Support and flexibility

- To explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them
- To provide named supervisor(s) who will meet with you to discuss your volunteering, any successes and problems and to provide this in a flexible manner
- To do our best to help you develop your volunteering role with us
- To give you suitable tasks, although Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind are not obliged to provide this

3. Expenses

- To reimburse the majority of travel and meal expenses in accordance with the Benefits & Allowances Policy
- Volunteers are required to keep all receipts and submit them when expenses are reimbursed in accordance with the Benefits & Allowances Policy, failure to do so may affect Expenses being paid.

4. Training

- To provide adequate Core training as detailed above.
- To provide ongoing training opportunities to support volunteer development
- Volunteers will only have access to ongoing training, whilst actively volunteering with the organisation, any exceptions to this must be agreed with the appropriate line manager.

5. Health and safety

- To provide a safe workplace and adequate training and feedback in support of our health and safety policy.
- Volunteers will be made aware of our health & safety policy during induction process.

6. Insurance

- To provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst carrying out their volunteering roles which have been approved and authorised by us.

7. Equality and Diversity

- To ensure all volunteers are dealt with in accordance with our equality and diversity policy and you can carry out your duties free from any discrimination, harassment or abuse.

8. Problems

- To try to resolve problems, complaints and difficulties you may have while volunteering with us in a fair, consistent and timely manner.
- In the event of an unresolved problem, to offer an opportunity to discuss the issues in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.
- **Dual Roles** – If a volunteer is working within multiple roles in the organisation, any issues should be taken to the appropriate line manager. However, regardless of paid or volunteer work, Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind have the right to share any concerns (or successes) with other members of staff within the organisation.

Part 2: the volunteer

We expect you:

- To help Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind fulfil its duty in providing the services as set out in the contractual arrangements for the organisation
- To perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability, while being able to refuse any task asked of you
- To follow the organisation's existing and future policies and procedures, in relation to its staff, volunteers and users of our services
- To maintain confidential information of the organisation and of people using our services
- To inform staff of any incidents or accidents that occur
- To choose the hours and days of availability while recognising the organisation's need to plan ahead
- To meet the time commitments and standards you have offered and give reasonable notice to the organisation so other arrangements can be made when this is not possible. You maintain the right to choose to cancel any particular intended attendance
- To attend support sessions and meetings relevant to the volunteering role
- To work as part of a team and contribute to a positive and open office culture
- To bring new ideas directly to the organisation
- To provide referees as agreed who may be contacted and agree to a DBS check (where applicable).

This agreement is binding in honour only, is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created now or at any time in the future.

Volunteer Agreement Form

I have received the following documentation: volunteer policy, code of conduct, DBS checking information (where applicable), emergency contact information, relevant service information with policies and health and safety information and have understand and agree to abide by them. I am aware that I am able to have access to the full policies on request.

Role: _____

Signed: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please return this bottom slip to the relevant volunteer supervisor. The volunteer should keep the policy and agreement form. The slip is to be kept in a volunteer's personal file.