

Working with Volunteers Policy

This policy is intended to ensure consistency and good practice in managing volunteers at Centre 404.

This document sets out Centre 404's responsibility to its volunteers and outlines what expectations Centre 404 has of volunteers. It sets out the general minimum standard for the involvement of volunteers. Centre 404 will ensure volunteers have adequate knowledge about their role, responsibilities and rights and access to any specific policies relevant to their role.

All volunteers will be made aware of the following rights, conditions and policies without having to ask. Details of current rates for expenses, Centre 404 Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Complaints Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, other relevant policies will be readily available. This information is kept with the Head of People and Resources at Centre 404 and service managers in each department.

1. Statement of Intent - Volunteers

Volunteers are a vital and valuable part of Centre 404. Volunteers are involved in all aspects of Centre 404's friendly and vibrant community and play a major role in Centre 404's life, from decision making in various committees, to working directly with our members through befriending or participation in our groups and teams. Our staff and service users value the time and commitment that volunteers give through supporting our services and our people.

We work with volunteers in a personalised way to help them achieve their goals and make a positive contribution. Centre 404 volunteers have opportunities to learn new skills, gain valuable work experience and receive support towards making a career start or change. Volunteers also have the chance to become part of our thriving community, increase their social circle and make a real difference to people with learning disabilities and their families. Volunteers also benefit from free training and ongoing support and supervision.

Centre 404 promotes volunteering in the community and encourages community involvement through voluntary work. Centre 404 recognises the value of volunteers and believes that they should be given clear guidelines about their rights, roles and responsibilities.

Key Values

- We believe that all volunteers should be valued for the contribution they make to sustaining and improving the quality of life of others and recognition given to their work on behalf of Centre 404
- We believe that the principles of fairness should underline all policies and practices of Centre 404 in relation to volunteers.
- Centre 404 requires its trustees, staff, volunteers, and organisations using its service to be committed to the principles inscribed in this volunteer policy.

2. Recruitment and Selection

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for the selection of volunteers for roles within Centre 404. Volunteers will be recruited from the widest possible base and selected according to their ability to perform the required task.

The Volunteer Coordinator will respond as soon as possible to the volunteer's enquiry and usually within one week unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example holiday or sickness.

A task description will be drawn up for each volunteer role, which will make clear Centre 404 expectations of the volunteer, and what Centre 404 offers the volunteer.

Volunteers will be asked to complete a joining form and diversity monitoring form.

If unable to involve a particular volunteer, the member of staff responsible for selection must make the reasons clear to the volunteer.

Thus ensuring:

- An open and fair recruitment procedure
- An interview based on the principles of equal opportunities.
- A clearly written task description and specified role within the organisation.

Volunteer role description:

- Before a voluntary position is created, the appropriate project manager will consider the following:
- A volunteer must not fill a job vacancy that someone was paid to do, they should play a supportive role and be provided with support from a staff member. Should a volunteer feel that they are doing the work of a paid role, they should speak to the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.
- The role must allow for satisfaction on the part of the volunteer.
- Staff must be consulted and where the role will affect the role of existing volunteers, they too must be consulted.
- A task description outlining the duties, skills or personal qualities required and the terms and conditions must be available in writing. Benefits to the volunteers must also be specified.

Equality and Diversity:

Centre 404 is committed to providing a welcoming and friendly environment for volunteers and that they should be treated fairly and without prejudice.

Centre 404 does not want anybody to be treated unfairly because of any protected characteristic including their race, religion or belief, sex, age, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, because they are disabled, if they are married or in a civil partnership, if they are an expectant mother or they have children to look after.

Each volunteer task description must make clear the volunteer's obligation to adhere to the Equality and Diversity standard of the organisation.

This Policy sets out the process that will be followed for recruiting volunteers to ensure a fair and consistent approach. A diversity monitoring form is sent out to all potential volunteers

alongside their volunteer joining form. This information is used to collect data to monitor the diversity of our volunteers and to understand where we may want to take positive action to recruit under-represented groups.

Behaviour and conduct by the volunteer should be in line with Centre 404's standard on Equality and Diversity and, in addition volunteers will have the opportunity to receive Equality and Diversity training during their placement and how to deal with any issues or complaints in relation to this.

Centre 404 will make every effort to make reasonable adjustments for volunteers with extra support needs or disabilities. If reasonable adjustments are required we will meet with you to discuss your needs and look at how we can accommodate these during your placement. If it is not possible to accommodate your needs, Centre 404 will give individuals a full explanation.

Induction and training:

All volunteers will be given a full induction to Centre 404, including a copy of the Volunteer Handbook. The induction will provide the information needed for the volunteer to carry out the tasks required. The Volunteer Coordinator will give volunteers a general induction to volunteer policy and procedures. Volunteers will then be allocated to a Centre 404 staff member who will provide a tailored induction to their specific role/ project. Offsite volunteers will be provided with a volunteer handbook through email or post. They will also be introduced to relevant staff and other volunteers.

Any reasonable training required to enable volunteers to perform their roles will be arranged and paid for by Centre 404. The Volunteer Coordinator will work with the volunteer to identify training needs and will contact the volunteer to let them know about any relevant training available to them. Training may include in-house training, shadowing and observing staff, online courses and external training.

Training Resources:

Each volunteer will need to carry out safeguarding training which is offered to them in their induction.

We also offer additional training and the Volunteer Coordinator will regularly email about any training opportunities relevant to individual volunteer roles. Volunteers can also request the list of available online trainings if interested in pursuing relevant additional qualifications or view the list here: <https://careskillsacademy.co.uk/our-courses/>

All courses are CPD accredited and endorsed by Skills for Care, and provide an official certificate upon successful completion.

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments:

Centre 404 considers requests for additional support and adaptations to the role for all volunteers. Should the volunteer need an adaptation to the role or their working environment to enable them to carry out the tasks, the Volunteer Coordinator will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments. If for any reason, adjustments cannot be made, the Volunteer Coordinator will communicate this to the

volunteer and the reason why. Additional support or adjustments are discussed at interview stage. Reasonable adjustments will be made where possible to enable the volunteer to do the role to their ability.

Centre 404 endeavours to tailor volunteer roles to the special requirements that may be needed by volunteers with learning disabilities and family carers by providing specific roles to enable people to fulfil their tasks and providing the individual support that is needed.

DBS Checks and Character References:

We carry out an enhanced DBS check for all regular volunteers (one-off or short-term volunteers are individually risk assessed).

Certain types of convictions/ cautions may restrict you from volunteering. Disclosures will be dealt with on an individual basis and considered in relation to the volunteer role applied for. Information may be shared with the manager of the service to decide whether the result would restrict you from volunteering. All DBS results are kept confidential.

In addition to an enhanced DBS check, all new volunteers are required to have two satisfactory character references. In the circumstance these are not available, we will provide three weeks supervision in substitute.

3. Volunteer Check-Ins

Centre 404 recognises the need for ongoing support and regular contact to enable the volunteer to carry out their role. Provision will be made for suitable and regular check-ins.

Volunteers will be allocated to a staff member who will support them in managing their tasks on a day to day basis. The Volunteer Coordinator will oversee their role and offer volunteers a variety of ways to receive feedback and discuss their progress. This will include email, surveys, phone calls or face to face meetings depending on the volunteer's preferred method and availability. Generally we offer a quarterly Volunteer Check-Ins but will also check in informally (through email or face to face) within the first week/s to see how your volunteering placement is going. Should you want to book an appointment to have a Volunteer Check-In at any time, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator directly.

Centre 404 will also provide opportunities for volunteers to meet and share experiences and group feedback sessions at two volunteer social events in the year. In addition, we hold recognition and appreciation events annually for our volunteers.

4. Roles in decision making and reviewing processes

Volunteers could be invited to comment on any major policy or operational changes to Centre 404 that may affect their role. They will be informed of updates about any changes at Centre 404 and invited to offer feedback.

Volunteers are encouraged to express their opinion on the work of Centre 404 and develop their role within Centre 404 in Volunteer Check-In sessions. A Volunteer Check-In is offered to each volunteer quarterly throughout the year, which takes place with the Volunteer Coordinator and offers the volunteer the chance to discuss any feedback, concerns or comments they have about how their placement is going.

Volunteers may be approached to consult on various volunteer policies, procedures and communications (newsletters, website etc.) at Centre 404. Their feedback will be considered and will be noted along with feedback from staff and trustees which will inform the organisation and contribute to the development of our work and services. Personnel Committee volunteers, who report to the Executive Committee as appropriate, will address volunteer issues and any policy revisions as an agenda item of every meeting. Volunteers also have the option to not be part of the review process.

5. Insurance

All Centre 404 volunteers are protected through our employee liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any tasks on behalf of Centre 404.

If volunteers would like to see the breakdown of the cover, a copy of 'Section 2 from the Liabilities and Legal Expenses Wording' can be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator.

6. Expenses

All reasonable out of pocket expenses cost related to volunteering should be reimbursed. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to claim these at regular intervals.

Travel: Reasonable expenses within London to and from the office/centre. However, we do need to have a journey history receipt. See www.tfl.gov.uk/oyster for details on how to register your oyster card. The cost of travel will be reimbursed up to the amount of £5 on provision of a receipt.

We also cover mileage cost if you use your own form of transport to and from your volunteer placement. The current mileage rates are:

- Cars and vans: 45p per mile regardless of engine size
- Motorcycles: 24p per mile
- Bicycles: 20p per mile

Claims for using own mode of transportation must be made monthly using the 'Volunteer Expenses Claim Form' and/or the Volunteer Mileage claim form. Copies can be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator.

Food: Where voluntary work involves a shift of more than 4 hours, the cost of lunch will be reimbursed up to the amount of £5 on provision of a receipt.

Volunteers can claim their expenses by sending their receipts in to the Volunteer Coordinator or the relevant project manager to submit to their service Volunteer Champion who will claim expenses on their behalf. Volunteers will get their expenses returned on a rolling week to week basis.

The best practise to claim expenses is to email receipts to the Volunteer Coordinator or relevant Volunteer Champion, but volunteers can also hand receipts in. Payment can be made in cash (if available in petty cash), cheque, or via BACS payment.

7. End of placement/ moving on

We ask volunteers if they can do a minimum time commitment of 3 months for admin and office roles and 6 months for direct support work with people with learning disabilities. These time commitments are only a guide for volunteers and they should discuss any changes/needs they may have with the Volunteer Coordinator. These time frames indicate a minimum time frame, not an end to the volunteer placement if they wish to continue volunteering for longer.

When a placement is coming to an end, we will discuss with volunteers possible ways to communicate the end of your placement to the person/ people they support and the volunteer will be asked to give feedback about their experience at Centre 404.

References

We will offer volunteers a reference for paid work, study or further volunteering after 3 months of successful volunteering with Centre 404.

If we feel the placement has not been successful or if the volunteer leaves before the tasks are completed we hold the right to refuse a reference.

8. Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of Centre 404 to ensure that there are defined health and safety procedures and adequate insurance cover for the tasks that volunteers are asked to undertake.

Volunteers are covered by Centre 404's *Health and Safety Policy*, and will be encouraged to read it and any other relevant policies or risk assessments at induction. Any specific health and safety training will be provided where required.

9. Reporting Complaints

If a volunteer has a grievance or a complaint about Centre 404 staff, service users, other volunteers or services, we will endeavour to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. The volunteer should initially discuss their concerns with the Volunteer Coordinator. If the volunteer remains unhappy, the procedures from Centre 404 *Compliments and Complaints Policy* will be followed to deal with the issues raised.

We will adopt the same procedure if a complaint is received about a volunteer. If it becomes apparent that the relationship between Centre 404 and a volunteer is not working out, it may be necessary to end the arrangement without notice.

10. Raising Concerns

Concerns involving abuse, malpractice, fraud or health & safety issues should be brought to the attention of the Head of Service immediately. If a volunteer is not sure who the appropriate service manager is, they should speak to the Volunteer Coordinator.

We will ask the volunteer to make a written disclosure as soon as possible, sign and date it. The disclosure will be treated confidentially and in accordance with our *Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy*, *Child Protection Policy* and *Whistleblowing Policy* and associated procedures.

Once the matter has been investigated, a decision will be made about what action will be taken if appropriate. The Volunteer Coordinator will then communicate the result of the investigation to the volunteer.

11. Data protection and GDPR

Centre 404 recognises that its first priority under the Data Protection Act is to avoid causing harm to individuals. In the main this means:

- keeping information securely in the right hands, and
- holding good quality information

Centre 404 ensures that all information it holds about the volunteers is kept in a secure place. Paper records are kept in a lockable filing cabinet and electronic information is maintained in a secure location on Centre 404's server. All computers are password protected and this ensures access is restricted to relevant data for specific staff or groups of people.

All data on volunteers is kept in line with our *Data Protection Policy* and *Data Retention Schedule* for volunteers.

Volunteers are also required to comply with procedures relating to the handling of personal data and confidentiality as described in the *Volunteer Agreement*, *Standard of Confidentiality* and the *Volunteer Handbook*.

Should Centre 404 require any information e.g. photos or quotes about the volunteer's placement for publicity purposes for our website, newsletter or annual review, we will seek their consent beforehand via our *Photo Consent Form*.

12. Confidentiality

Volunteers may be placed in a position where they have access to confidential records and personally sensitive information in roles such as data inputting and interviewing. It is important to respect these confidences.

All information regarding volunteers should be kept in the strictest confidence and, except in exceptional circumstances, should not leave the organisation.

If a volunteer has any concerns about information they have received regarding a volunteer, business, staff members, service user or Centre 404 they should discuss this information with the Volunteer Coordinator or Head of People and Resources.