

WVSDA Volunteer Policy

This policy has been written after consultation with trustees, staff and volunteers. It is a summary of how Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency (WVSDA) aims to involve volunteers in its work. This policy must be read in conjunction with Volunteer Handbook, Equal Opportunities Policy, Health and Safety Policy, and Confidentiality Policy.

What is the aim of WVSDA?

Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency is a registered charity based in Wandsworth. Our mission statement includes enabling individuals and groups to improve the quality of life for themselves and the community through the medium of volunteering.

WVSDA is governed by a Board of Trustees, who as volunteers, act as non-paid, non-executive directors.

1. Positive Volunteering

WVSDA believes that volunteers can make a positive difference to the community and to themselves. As a local Volunteer Development Agency, we are committed to enabling and encouraging this process as best as we can.

Volunteering is an activity where individuals decide, freely and by choice, to help achieve the organisation's aim without expectations of financial or other rewards in kind. We understand that people volunteer for many reasons and we value their contribution, commitment and participation. Their involvement complements the work our organisation undertakes, but does not replace the work of paid staff members.

We believe that for volunteering to be successful, the needs of the organisation, service users and volunteers must match. We aim to ensure this match through our recruitment and selection procedures and annual monitoring and evaluation of volunteering programmes.

As the Volunteer Development Agency in Wandsworth, we aim to be an example of good practice in volunteer management to other voluntary and community organisations who work with volunteers. We will allocate adequate resources to enable volunteer involvement in our organisation, but this depends on available funding and other work commitments and priorities.

2. Equal Opportunities

WVSDA believes that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to equal treatment. We ensure that everyone who comes into contact with our organisation experiences equality of opportunity.

WVSDA recognizes that in our society groups and individuals have been, and continue to be, discriminated against on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, social class, gender, sexuality, marital status or caring responsibility, physical or mental disability, mental health, social class, political or religious belief, HIV status or of any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view.

The aim of the Equal Opportunities policy is to ensure that no workers, volunteer or paid staff, and that no job applicant, client or customer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds stated above.

WVSDA is committed to taking positive steps to redress the imbalance and provide genuine equality of opportunity to enable the organisation to make full and effective use of both volunteers and paid staff.

3. Recruitment

WVSDA is committed to ensuring volunteering opportunities are open to everyone and committed to anti-discriminatory practice. We ensure that our recruitment process is fair and transparent at all stages.

The Volunteer Handbook includes more details of the recruitment procedure, including information on how the volunteer posts are advertised, application forms, interview, selection process, task description and person specification, references, trial-period and Volunteer Agreement.

4. Induction & Training

WVSDA is committed to providing volunteers with training which will enhance and widen their skills which will benefit both the individuals and WVSDA.

Volunteers will be offered training and personal development opportunities from both within and external to the organisation.

A general induction programme will be arranged for all volunteers. This will take place as soon as is possible after their appointment. The induction will be delivered by the member of the staff team or volunteer who will also be responsible for supporting and supervising the volunteer. Volunteers should be introduced to trustees and other people associated with the organisation during their induction period.

The induction programme should include:

- Familiarisation with the premises and an outline of all projects and service provision.
- Potted history of WVSDA, its management structure and key personalities, strategic development plan and current priorities.
- The general role of the voluntary sector in Wandsworth and the importance of maintaining good working relationships.
- Advice about personal security, insurance, reimbursement of expenses, local facilities, etc.
- General policies and principles such as Health and Safety, Volunteer Handbook etc.
- Provision of relevant information i.e. contact numbers for staff etc.

Training to complete Volunteer Roles.

Training for specific tasks will be the responsibility of the member of staff or volunteer who will be supporting and supervising the volunteer. Training will be offered in line with the volunteer's task description and ensure that reference is made to relevant policies. It is essential that this training is recorded and the standards of training are consistent throughout the organisation.

Members of staff should be aware of the need to continually assess the training needs of a volunteer and should support volunteers to obtain relevant qualifications as well as update their skills. It should be noted that the additional training of volunteers will depend on appropriate and available resources.

Where possible WVSDA will provide opportunities and support volunteers to achieve relevant awards and or recognition for their demonstrated voluntary commitment.

5. Volunteer Expenses

While recognising that some volunteers may not choose to claim out of pocket expenses, WVSDA recognises that volunteers will come from all economic backgrounds and intends that volunteering should be accessible to all regardless of income.

WVSDA will ensure that no individual is financially disadvantaged by the direct action of being a volunteer.

Expenses will be discussed with the volunteer during the interview process as well as being explained in the Volunteer Handbook.

All volunteers can claim daily travel expenses on public transport up to a maximum of £3.50 per day. Volunteers can also claim up to £3.00 as a contribution towards snacks and refreshments when working for more than 6 hours. Other out-of-pocket expenses e.g. cost of care should first be discussed

during the application stage and are subject to financial state of the organisation. Where 'special' expenses are to be claimed this agreement must be recorded in writing and signed by both parties.

Expenses will be reimbursed as swiftly as possible to minimise inconveniences caused for volunteers. Volunteers must keep receipts of all expenses and complete the expense claim forms available from their line manager.

Volunteers must seek approval of the person responsible for their support and supervision before they can make a purchase on behalf of the organisation. Any purchase over £50.00 must have written approval of the Chief Executive.

Volunteers who are receiving benefits should seek advice as to their rights and obligations to engage in voluntary work and any impact that this may have on their benefits. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform the benefit office about their commitment to volunteering.

6. Support and Supervision

Each volunteer will have a named staff member to provide support and guidance on a day to day basis.

If that person is unavailable when a volunteer attends, clear instructions will be left for the volunteer and another staff member briefed. In addition the volunteer and line manager should meet at least once month to review progress and to discuss any concerns or changes that need to be made to their task description.

Volunteers are part of WVSDA team and will be invited to quarterly volunteer meetings in order to be kept up to date with the developments within the organisation. This will also provide an opportunity for volunteers to share their views and concerns on the organisation activities. The views of volunteers will be represented at an appropriate level e.g. Senior Management Team or the Board of Trustees. It

is the responsibility of the HR representative to collect this information and ensure that it is dealt with in an appropriate fashion.

7. Insurance and Health & Safety

WVSDA is committed to ensuring that volunteers are not exposed to unnecessary risks while volunteering. Volunteers also have responsibility not to expose themselves and others to unnecessary risks.

WVSDA is unable to accept responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personal possessions or valuables.

While it is not envisaged that volunteers would be asked to use their private motor vehicles for conducting their volunteer tasks, if the need arises and by agreement, (all agreements should be recorded), it is the volunteers' responsibility to inform their insurer in writing that the vehicle is being used for voluntary work.

A copy of the complete Health and Safety policy is held as a separate policy and can be obtained on request.

WVSDA is committed to providing and maintaining healthy working conditions for all individuals, this is in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Whatever information, training and supervision is required for this purpose will be provided. Volunteers must follow health and safety guidelines and any concerns or incidents must be reported to the nominated Health and Safety officer. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for health and safety. Volunteers should note that WVSDA is a non-smoking building.

8. When we may need to end a volunteer placement

If there are concerns about a volunteer's conduct, it is first raised in person by Volunteer Development Manager. After an initial meeting, the Volunteer Development Manager will decide whether the volunteer's conduct is something that can be improved or if the volunteer or WVSDA decides the volunteer placement must be ended.

The Volunteer Development Manager will write to the volunteer within 2 weeks to explain what the decision is and why this is happening.

9. Volunteers who wish to leave

We ask that volunteers who wish to end their placement give us as much notice as possible. WVSDA will also try to give volunteers advance notice if their placement may need to end sooner than planned.

Volunteers who leave WVSDA for any reason will be invited to an exit interview. This procedure is designed to help improve the support given to volunteers and to record their achievements and provide vital statistical information.

10. Confidentiality

Personal details of staff, volunteers and service users are treated in the strictest of confidence. Information of a confidential nature should not be disclosed to anyone outside WVSDA, without prior permission from the Volunteer Development Manager and explicit consent of the individual concerned. All volunteers are provided with a copy of the Confidentiality Policy and are expected to work within it.

11. Complaints Procedures for Volunteers

If a volunteer wishes to raise anything relating to another volunteer or any staff member, they should in the first instance talk to the person concerned, to try and resolve the matter informally.

If this is not possible, the volunteer should speak to the Volunteer Development Manager. The Volunteer Development Manager will raise the issue with the person concerned as soon as reasonably possible or agree to chair a meeting between the person raising the issue and the person to whom the issue relates.

Once this has been completed the Volunteer Development Manager will write to the volunteer to inform them of the result.

12. Reviewing this policy.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Volunteer Development Manager, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Trustees, staff members and volunteers.