



VOLUNTARY WORKERS - POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The policy is intended to set out the values, principles and procedures underpinning DRH's approach to working with volunteers and to ensure fairness and consistency in dealing with a diverse range of people.

1.1 A Volunteer is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, doing so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward – except for the reimbursement of actual out-of-pocket expenses

1.2 DRH welcome the support of volunteer workers and actively encourage their presence in our Homes. We recognise that volunteering can be beneficial to DRH; individual service users; local community and to the volunteers themselves.

- Volunteers may bring new perspectives, skills and new opportunities to the benefit of service users.
- Volunteers may help to widen a service users relationship network.
- Volunteers may help to strengthen links with the local community and enhance local knowledge of the role of DRH
- Volunteers may help to tackle prejudicial attitudes towards disabled people
- Volunteers may decide to pursue a career in social care
- Volunteering opportunities may assist people to enhance their own health and well-being
- Volunteering may provide a stepping-stone into employment and training.

1.3 However, it is recognised that personal harm to service users, visitors or staff may occur if volunteers are not thoroughly screened prior to their commencing voluntary work, given adequate health and safety guidance and training appropriate to the tasks that they will be asked to fulfil. Managers are also aware that a volunteer may breach confidentiality or may give inappropriate advice to a service users if they are not thoroughly briefed on their own role and the limitations of their activities.

2.0 PROCEDURE

2.1 Volunteering opportunities will be identified by reference to the needs of individual service users in each DRH facility. Roles for potential volunteers will be defined according to the benefits that might accrue from the involvement of a volunteer e.g.

- Improving communication & social skills
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Increasing opportunities for community participation.
- Access to new skills, competencies and education

2.2 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION & SCREENING

1. Prospective volunteers will be sent/given an application form to become a voluntary worker.
2. References will be taken up in the same way as for paid staff.
3. CRB; POVA list and health checks will also be organised.
4. The prospective volunteer will visit the Home and service users
5. Opportunities will be available for assessing feedback from service users and team-members
6. An informal interview/meeting will take place to appraise the prospective volunteer of the contribution that they might be expected to make and to agree suitability.
7. Confirmation of the volunteer agreement will be sent to the volunteer. This will include:
 - The duties which the volunteer has agreed to cover
 - The name of her manager and supervisor
 - The limitations of the work, e.g. must always work under supervision, etc.
 - Details of the importance of confidentiality.
 - All volunteers must be encouraged to check with their supervisor before taking on work that they are not confident about.
 - Reimbursement of genuine out-of-pocket expenses

A criminal conviction will not necessarily prevent an applicant from volunteering. Individual circumstances will be assessed fairly and with the best interest of service users taking priority.

2.3 TRAINING

Induction training should be organised for every new volunteer. This induction should cover areas of health and safety, fire, personal safety, communication etc.

Particular emphasis will be given on the importance of following individual support plans/guidelines. Volunteers will also receive guidance on issues relating to inter-personal relationships and boundary issues.

A risk assessment should be carried out to consider the tasks that the volunteer is expected to cover and the environment in which the volunteer will be working. This will dictate the appropriate training to be offered that is compulsory for paid staff. e.g. if the volunteer is not involved in food handling there will be no need to take a basic food hygiene course. The same applies to Crisis Prevention training, but it may be advisable for all volunteers to take a short course on Personal Safety and Awareness.

2.3 LEGAL ISSUES

It is important to ensure that the boundaries between the role of a volunteer and an employee are never blurred

- Managers should ensure that volunteers receive no inducements other than reimbursement for necessary and genuine expenses incurred – based on receipts submitted with a valid claim form.
- Training offered should be linked to the role that the person is carrying out, rather than a general perk or enticement to volunteer
- Volunteers should be expected to fulfil the expectations detailed in their Volunteer Agreement but will have no contractual obligation to work.

Managers should ensure that volunteers are treated fairly and consistently. If a manager decides that they wish to discontinue the services provided by a volunteer they should discuss relevant issues with the Deputy Chief Executive.

DRH has a duty of care towards volunteers. In practice this means taking all reasonable steps to avoid harm coming to them, either through action or inaction. Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 also places a duty on DRH “to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that persons not in their employment, who may be affected by their undertaking, are not exposed to risks to their health and safety” and “to give information as might as might affect their health or safety”.

What these legal duties imply is that managers should be aware of potential risks to volunteers, and take steps to reduce them where they are unacceptable. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 compel employers to carry out and to document risk assessments on their activities, again taking into account anyone who may be affected by their work.

Volunteers retain rights we all share as citizens, so the Data Protection Act applies to personal information kept on them.

FURTHER INFORMATION/CONTACTS:

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