

VOLUNTEERING SERVICES POLICY

1.1 Introduction

Symphony Healthcare Services (“SHS”) recognises the important role that voluntary activity plays in complementing the work of its staff and therefore values, supports and encourages the efforts of these individuals who give their time and energy to benefit the organisation. Volunteering can contribute to raising individual self-esteem and self-confidence and volunteers can make a valuable contribution to the quality of life of service users and carers.

1.2 Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to advise volunteers and SHS of their respective responsibilities and provide a fair and consistent framework for the recruitment and placement of volunteers across SHS. The policy details the arrangements and procedures necessary to ensure that volunteers are engaged in accordance with current health and safety legislation and that our staff, service users, and volunteers are not exposed to any hazards that would have adverse effect on their health and safety.

1.3 Definitions

Volunteers: someone who freely gives regular, unpaid help that either enhances the services that NHS staff can provide or helps SHS to improve and develop its services.

1.4 Benefits of volunteering

Volunteers help to provide a wide range of activities and services that contribute to the quality of the patient and visitor experience. Volunteering enables those who take part to participate and make a real difference.

Volunteering offers a way for individuals to contribute to their local community which in turn provides SHS with the benefit of local support.

Volunteers gain new experiences, skills and confidence, and can offer SHS a different perspective on the working environment.

2. VOLUNTARY WORK

2.1 Eligibility

The minimum age for volunteers within SHS is 18; volunteer applicants aged between 14 and 18 can be considered in a limited number of areas due to the emotional and sensitive issues of any clinical environment. The decision to accept volunteers aged 14 – 18 is on a case by case basis via partnership agreements with the youth organisation, including Duke of Edinburgh.

Individuals requiring a period of work experience are not classed as volunteers.

SHS welcomes applications for volunteering from across the community and there is no upper age limit, however the volunteer must be able to fulfil the duties and demands of the volunteer role which will be subject to risk and Work Health assessments.

2.2 Length/Location of the Volunteer Placement

Volunteer placements of any length may be organised within SHS, all volunteer roles must have a written role description and be clear about the purpose and activity associated with them.

2.3 Volunteer role descriptions

Volunteer roles should always complement or add value. The role should not replace the job of paid staff. The task should be a specific activity for which the volunteer can take responsibility for and something that the volunteer wants to do, and which benefits the service and the service users.

Volunteer placements will be made in line with the volunteer's area of interest alongside the operational requirements of SHS and the individual's ability to perform the task required. Individuals will be placed after consideration of their maturity, experience and any health issues.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Managers' and Staff Responsibilities

- Managers are responsible for ensuring that they and their staff are familiar with, and follow the provisions of, the Volunteer Services Policy and that the volunteers are integrated into the team whenever practicable.
- The standards of care and conduct of volunteers should be the same high quality as those of staff.
- Volunteers should be assigned a named contact person by the manager of the area they are working in to provide supervision, support and regular reviews.

- The manager should provide the volunteer with induction and training in the specific tasks to be undertaken and they should receive ongoing opportunities for learning and development.
- The manager must ensure that the volunteer has a clear understanding of the duties of care and confidentiality attached to working in a healthcare environment and that they have the necessary levels of supervision at all times.
- Any accident/incident involving the volunteer should be reported in the normal way on Ulysses.
- It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that the requirements of Health and Safety legislation and SHS Policy on this subject are satisfied.
- Managers will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate safeguards and controls are put in place to ensure the health and safety of volunteers within SHS.
- Staff should ensure that any volunteers working in their area are made to feel a welcomed member of the team. This is key to ensuring volunteers are fulfilled in their role and ensuring their long term retention.

3.1.1 Requests for Volunteers

Any practice requesting a volunteer placement should email the HR Department – SymphonyHR@ydh.nhs.uk

A role description will be drawn up by the manager leading on the proposed volunteer placement. The role description and training requirements will be agreed prior to the commencement of any recruitment.

3.2 Occupational Health Responsibilities

The Occupational Health Department is responsible for ensuring that volunteers are fit and able to undertake the work for which they have volunteered and for informing the HR Department of the outcome of any occupational health review.

Volunteers will be offered an Occupational Health check, if required, following a break (in excess of three months) in their volunteer duties following ill health.

3.3 Volunteers' Responsibilities

- All volunteers are expected to maintain the same professional standards as SHS's employed staff and adhere to SHS policies and guidelines at all times.
- All volunteers not affiliated to an outside organisation are accountable to the Practice Manager.

- Volunteers are expected to participate in all training and induction sessions which the manager feels is relevant and necessary to their role. Volunteers may only undertake their voluntary work at times agreed with their manager/supervisor.
- Volunteers should raise any issues of concern relating to their voluntary work with their immediate manager/supervisor or through the SHS Whistleblowing procedures as appropriate.
- Volunteers are required to wear suitable clothing and footwear for the work situation and be neat and tidy at all times. In keeping with our commitment to professionalism and customer service, volunteers are expected to adhere to the dress code while in their volunteer placement both on SHS premises or representing SHS.
- It is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify the area to which they are allocated if they are unable to be present and to do so as far in advance as possible. Volunteers should always report on and off duty on each occasion to the appropriate Manager/Supervisor.
- Volunteers are expected to hold in confidence any information about the employer, staff or patients which they may obtain during the work period and comply with all SHS policies and procedures, particularly in relation to accident reporting and, health and safety. The volunteer must always alert the appropriate manager if a client or patient is known to them.
- Every workplace has its own hazard and volunteers are expected to act responsibly at all time and take care not to expose themselves, or others to risk. Volunteers should not operate machinery unless they have been trained in its use and should not attempt to lift heavy or awkward objects without formal manual handling training. If in doubt, ask.
- Any Volunteer who is arrested on any charge or served with a summons on a criminal charge must inform their Manager/Supervisor immediately. SHS reserves the right to terminate the Volunteer agreement immediately.
- Volunteers are expected to inform their manager immediately if they sustain an injury at work. Volunteers should also inform their manager immediately if they feel unwell.
- Volunteers are strongly advised not to bring any items of monetary or sentimental value into SHS premises. Any property brought onto the premises is at the volunteer's own risk. SHS cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage.
- SHS premises are smoke free sites. This means there is no smoking allowed inside or outside any of the buildings, including car parks, grounds or walkways.

3.4 Monitoring Performance

While volunteers are not employed by SHS it is still necessary to establish a level of performance, conduct and attendance in order to provide a safe and consistent service. Any arrangements for monitoring performance will be agreed with the volunteer, HR and the Practice Manager at the beginning of a placement for a review after an agreed length of time.

If a manager has concerns about a volunteer's performance or behaviour, the manager should highlight this to HR at the earliest opportunity. The manager and HR should then consider what line of action is to be taken.

In the case of volunteers from affiliated organisations, the nominated lead from that organisation and the Practice Manager will work together to address any performance issues with the support of HR.

Volunteers who feel they have a complaint should, if they are able, refer the matter to the Practice Manager. If this is not appropriate they should raise the matter with HR.

3.5 Substance Misuse

If volunteers report for duty under the influence of alcohol, drugs, solvents or any other substance they will be asked to leave the SHS premises immediately.

4. TRAINING

All volunteers are expected to attend an Induction, which includes training relevant to the duties outlined in the job description such as fire safety training, manual handling or conflict resolution training.

Volunteers are also expected to attend specific familiarisation and training sessions associated with the area in which they are placed.

Volunteers may also be offered the opportunity to attend suitable training courses to improve their skills or enhance their knowledge. This is solely at the discretion of SHS.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

SHS is committed to diversity in all areas of its work and to developing and maintaining an organisation in which different abilities, backgrounds and needs are valued.

The equal opportunities principles that apply to the recruitment and employment of paid members of staff also apply to volunteers. Furthermore, SHS recognises the value that volunteers with different backgrounds, skills, outlook and experience bring to the organisation and will not discriminate against volunteers on the grounds of any protected characteristic, i.e. age, disability, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, domestic circumstances, social and employment status, gender reassignment, or political affiliation.

6. EXPENSES

7.1 Business Travel

Volunteers are eligible to claim reimbursement of mileage in line with the SHS Travel and Expenses Policy.

7.2 Public Transport Expenses

Public transport expenses will be reimbursed on presentation of a valid ticket/receipt and completed travel claim form.

8. INSURANCE COVER

All volunteers will have the same indemnity cover as employees for the purposes of claims arising from any such placement. SHS is a member of the NHS Litigation Authority's Liabilities to Third Parties Scheme, which provides indemnity for employer and public liabilities.

However volunteers working on behalf of an affiliated registered charity are covered through the indemnity liability insurance of that charity. All volunteers are covered through the public liability scheme for working on SHS premises.

Volunteers who use their own vehicle in the course of their volunteering duties should ensure that their car insurance covers them for driving as part of a volunteer scheme. The manager must ensure they receive a copy of the insurance policy.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

During the discharge of their duties, volunteers may find themselves in possession of confidential or highly personal information about patients, their relatives and visitors, staff or colleagues. Confidentiality applies to all practice issues including a person's attendance at a clinic, presence at the practice or any other SHS premises. In addition, volunteers must never try to elicit information from a patient about their medical condition or reason for being at the practice. Volunteers must not disclose or discuss such information either during or after a volunteer placement.

Confidentiality is regarded as a serious issue and a volunteer may be asked to leave if found to be in breach of this code of practice. All volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality statement as part of the recruitment process.

10. DATA PROTECTION

Volunteers can be assured that SHS only requests information that is needed and that it will keep the information securely, limit access to it and will not pass on any details without consent, unless legally obliged to do so, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Volunteers have the right to view information held by SHS about them under the Freedom of Information Act. Any questions about the information SHS keeps should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

All volunteers must ensure they comply with SHS policies regarding the confidentiality of information and data protection. Any queries should be directed to the HR Department in the first instance.

Further information on the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts can be found at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Volunteers are covered by the SHS Health and Safety and associated policies, copies of which can be obtained from the Practice Manager or HR Department. All volunteers must ensure they comply with these policies.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

It is the responsibility of the Practice Manager to advise HR of any associated risks applicable to a volunteer placement in their area. Any specific risks identified will be covered through induction and additional training.

A risk assessment will be completed on each volunteer role, to identify any risks associated with the role and agree actions to remove or reduce these risks and ensure a safe volunteering environment. The risk assessment should also include an assessment of the requirement for a DBS check.

Completed risk assessments will be shared with volunteers at induction so they are aware of their responsibility to reduce and control risk.

13. TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT

A volunteer may resign at any time by informing their manager. It is appreciated if termination can be given in writing or by e-mail, providing as much notice as possible. All SHS property must be returned to the Practice Manager e.g. ID badge, lanyard and uniform. If the volunteer has been given IT access, the IT department should be asked to close down their account on leaving.

SHS reserves the right to remove any volunteer whose performance or placement is unsatisfactory.

ANNEX A - RECRUITMENT PROCESS

1.1 Application

All prospective volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application Form and attend an interview.

1.2 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Volunteers are required to complete a DBS application form for some placements in SHS. All DBS checks will be handled in line with the DBS Policy. Any previous offences will not necessarily preclude an individual from volunteering with SHS. It is important to be honest in the registration process. Any disclosures will be treated in the strictest confidence.

A DBS risk assessment must be completed for all placements by the recruiting manager.

If a DBS check is returned with a conviction, advice will be sought from the Human Resources Department.

1.3. References

Volunteers will be required to provide the details of 2 references.

1.4 Occupational Health

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an Occupational Health Questionnaire. The aim of health screening is to:

- ensure the volunteer is fit to carry out the mental and physical tasks of the intended role without risk to themselves, colleagues or patients
- identify whether any role or task modification or additional support is required, ensure it is accurately identified, that SHS puts in place any agreed modifications highlighted or to provide an assured process to SHS when adjustments are not required

All volunteers must be prepared to complete an immunisation and vaccination form and provide evidence of an up to date history of vaccinations where required.

1.5 Interview

All volunteer applicants are interviewed by the potential manager.

Any person recruited as a volunteer, will have their specific duties and responsibilities explained to them. It will also be provided in writing in the form of a role description, a signed copy of which will be kept on their personal file.

1.6 Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers are issued with a Volunteering Agreement.