

# Leeds Mind Policy



For better  
mental health

## Volunteering

### Why do we need this policy?

Leeds Mind was started by volunteers, and they have formed a significant part of the organisation's workforce ever since. This policy acknowledges the importance of that relationship.

Many policies have been written for and about paid employees, even if they *should* also apply to volunteers. This policy plugs any gaps, brings relevant points together, and makes clear the responsibilities of the organisation, and its volunteers, in their relationship.

### Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all Leeds Mind volunteers. (That is, to anybody who 'chooses to volunteer', and contribute to the running of the organisation for no pay.) It should be referred to by them, and by everyone in the organisation who is involved with volunteers. Some Leeds Mind service users also contribute to the organisation for no pay as a therapeutic element of their recovery, but do not 'choose to volunteer'.

### Introduction

We promote volunteering in order to enhance our services and enrich the organisation. Anybody can volunteer with Leeds Mind if they want to contribute to our work, are prepared to work within our structure and according to our values, policies and procedures. All volunteering should be beneficial, purposeful and support our aims and values.

#### 1. People volunteer with us for many different reasons, including to: -

- try something different
- aid recovery
- get training and/or qualifications
- 'give back' to a service they have used
- get work experience
- gain new skills
- use existing skills
- feel valued
- meet people
- get back into the routine of work

**2. We want to have volunteers in the organisation for a number of reasons, including to: -**

- bring new and diverse perspectives, expertise and skills to our work
- try new ideas for which we do not have funding or skills
- increase service user involvement
- provide another route to recovery
- provide an added dimension to an existing service

**3. Volunteers can take part in a wide range of work across the organisation, including:-**

- befriending
- counselling
- facilitating or helping with groups
- helping with tea bars
- admin
- serving on the Executive Committee

We are always looking for new areas of work for volunteers to do. Volunteers may sometimes take on work previously done by paid workers. This should only happen when it will give added value to our work, rather than to off-load work on to volunteers. We value our volunteers and respect the contribution they make to the organisation.

## **Policy**

### **Definition of A Volunteer**

*“A volunteer is someone who is unpaid, who gives time and energy to benefit the organisation and contribute to its aims, while gaining a rewarding experience of working and enhanced personal growth”*

### **Recruitment**

The way we recruit volunteers is one of the key ways of ensuring the placement is a good experience for both the volunteer and for Leeds Mind.

We will recruit anyone applying to be a volunteer if we:-

- Have an appropriate role, or can develop a role around their specific skills and Experience.
- Are confident they are able to carry out the role.
- Can provide a reasonable level of support based on our previous experience of supporting volunteers in the same or a similar role.

Where possible, if we are not able to place someone within Leeds Mind, we will give them information to help them find voluntary work somewhere else. (See separate document ‘Procedure: recruitment of volunteers’.)

Job substitution - We do not, and will not, directly replace paid staff with volunteers.

## Induction and training

- All volunteers must take part in an induction within their project, to their role and the environment in which they will work.
- A general induction to Leeds Mind is also available, but is optional.
- Other training on a variety of topics is also available through the organisation, and sometimes externally.

## Responsibility

- Volunteers must never be left in a position where they have to take responsibility for unforeseen events.
- Volunteers will not work alone without careful consideration and full agreement.
- All volunteers have a responsibility to work within all relevant Leeds Mind policies.

## Communications and involvement

- Volunteers should be included in existing communications, and be kept fully informed of what is going on, in their project and throughout the organisation.
- The project manager and volunteer coordinator have responsibility for ensuring volunteers are kept informed and given opportunities for further involvement.
- As a volunteer you have the opportunity to get involved in the organisation to whatever level suits you. As well as carrying out your agreed role, you may also choose to take part in other areas of the project and the organisation.
- Many meetings and events open to paid staff are open to volunteers. This applies within individual projects and across the organisation as a whole. Such meetings and events include:-
  - social events
  - whole organisation meetings (WOMs)
  - volunteer forums
  - the Annual General Meeting
- Volunteers should not be told that they *have to* take part in a meeting or an event unless it is essential to carrying out their agreed role.

## Support, supervision and review

- All volunteers will be properly supported.
- Supervision plays a key role in this, and in ensuring that the contribution of volunteers is recognised, valued and respected.
- **Every** volunteer must have a level of supervision appropriate to their needs and role.
- Every volunteer should take part in an annual review  
(See separate document 'Procedure: supervision and review of volunteers'.)

## Expenses – See Appendix 1 Volunteer Expenses

- Leeds Mind volunteers can claim for all legitimate 'out of pocket' expenses, including the cost of:-
  - return travel between home and the place of volunteering
  - travel undertaken in the course of volunteering, as agreed
  - travel for training and conferences, as agreed
  - meals taken when the voluntary work or training is more than four hours in any given day
  - stationery and phone calls used for voluntary work, as agreed

- any necessary health and safety measures
- This list is not exhaustive. Any reasonable expense incurred in the course of voluntary work *can* be submitted as a claim, but anything outside the above list (which is often the case in befriending, for example) should be checked *before* spending the money.
- We recognise that the cost of care of dependants while doing voluntary work is a legitimate expense. We regret that we cannot afford to refund it, apart from in occasional exceptional circumstances that have been agreed in advance (See separate document 'Procedure: claiming volunteer expenses.')
- All forms and procedures for claiming expenses should be made as clear and straightforward as possible

### **Insurance**

- All Leeds Mind volunteers are covered in the work they do by the organisation's insurance policies (employer's liability and public liability).
- Leeds Mind is not insured for volunteers to carry passengers, while doing voluntary work, in their own car. Any volunteer who wants to do this, as part of their voluntary work, must first write to their own insurer to confirm that they are insured for this. (Most policies do cover this.) Some insurers may require an additional premium to be paid, which Leeds Mind will not pay.
- Volunteers must obtain a written response from their insurer, confirming that proper cover is in place, indemnifying Leeds Mind to third party claims, before using their vehicle for volunteering

### **Capability**

If a volunteer is having difficulty fulfilling their agreed role this should be identified in supervision. We will offer appropriate support and training. If the issue cannot be solved we will support the volunteer to accept this. We will try to find them a more suitable role in the organisation

### **Health and Safety**

- Every volunteer must read, understand and comply with Leeds Mind's health and safety policy.
- Volunteers share responsibility for their own and other's health and safety.

### **Additional policies that this policy dovetails with**

- Protection of vulnerable adults
- Health and safety
- Conflict resolution
- Grievance procedure
- Dignity at work
- Boundaries

### **Further Information**

- Volunteering England - [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)
- Voluntary Action Leeds - [www.val.org.uk](http://www.val.org.uk)

## **Accessibility**

If you would like a copy of this policy in a larger print, get in touch with us at Leeds Mind Central Admin by phone (0113 230 7608) or email ([leeds.mind@leedsmind.org.uk](mailto:leeds.mind@leedsmind.org.uk)) and we'll be happy to send you one. You can also download a copy, in whatever text size you like, from our website – [www.leedsmind.org.uk](http://www.leedsmind.org.uk)

**Date formally approved by**

**Leeds Mind Executive Committee: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

**Date to be reviewed:**

**March 2008**

## Appendix 1: Volunteer expenses

### Summary of Expenses that can be claimed

Travel by car	40p per mile *
Travel by bicycle	25p per mile *
Travel by public transport	actual cost *
* Maximum per return journey	£8.00
Cost of meal when volunteering over 4 hours	up to £2.50
Meal allowance when working off site	up to £13.41
Meal provided by a project	no claim
All other items	by agreement

### Procedure for claiming volunteer expenses

#### 1 Information

All volunteers should be told:-

- what expenses they can claim
- when they can claim
- how to claim
- the reasons and need to make claims

#### 2. How to claim expenses

- All claims should be made on the expenses claim form, and should:-
  - State the reason for the claim
  - Be signed by the volunteer and approved by their Volunteer Coordinator (or another member of staff, as agreed).
  - Have all receipts (including tickets for public transport, or itemised phone bills) attached.
- Claims should be made within a month of spending the money, unless agreed otherwise
- Claims should be made to the volunteer co-ordinator at the appropriate project, or to another member of staff at the project as agreed
- Claims should be paid as soon as possible
- Claims should generally be paid in cash, but can be paid by personal cheque with agreement, if that is better for the volunteer

#### Travel

- All claims for travel expenses should include the reason for the journey

- Travel should be by bicycle, public transport or car.
- We will pay for the cost of an appropriate travel card (such as a 'First Day') where this is cheaper.
- All claims for travel by bicycle or car should include a record of the mileage
- The cost of a taxi will be considered when necessary if agreed in advance.
- We will not pay more than a set maximum per return journey unless agreed in advance (see appendix, *Summary of rates* for current figure).

### **Meals**

- The cost of a meal up to an agreed maximum (see appendix, *Summary of rates* for current figure) can be claimed when the voluntary work is greater than 4 hours in any given day.
- If a volunteer works through a meal time in a project where meals are provided they may be given a meal, regardless of the time spent volunteering.
- When volunteering outside the organisation the meal allowance is the same as that available to paid staff (see appendix, *Summary of expenses rates* for current figure).

## **3. Choosing not to claim expenses**

Some volunteers may not wish to claim expenses. Please note that it is useful for the organisation if they claim anyway and donate the money back if they want to, as this helps us show funders the true cost of running the organisation.

## **Appendix 2: Procedure for supervision and review of volunteers**

- All volunteers will be properly supported.
- Supervision plays a key role in this, and in ensuring that the contribution of volunteers is recognised, valued and respected.

### **Supervision**

- **Every** volunteer must have a level of supervision appropriate to their needs and role.
- Each volunteer must be given a named supervisor.
- The aims of supervision are to ensure:-
  - the quality of service to our clients
  - the work of volunteers is appreciated
  - volunteers are supported in their work
  - volunteers are fully included in communications within the project and the organisation, so they understand the context in which they are working
  - volunteers are clear about their roles and responsibilities
  - volunteers understand the lines of authority and support
  - support and guidance on personal and professional development is offered
- The format of supervision will vary according to the individual needs and roles of volunteers.
- Volunteers should be involved in deciding what level of supervision they need.
- Each volunteer must have regular one-to-one time set aside for supervision.
- Supervision must always be recorded (written down).
- For some volunteers supervision should be for one hour each month (as for paid staff) particularly for someone directly involved in delivering services.
- For some volunteers supervision may be much shorter, and much less frequent. For example, 10 minutes every three months may be enough. An occasional chat, however, is not adequate.
- Supervision should always include: what is going well; what is not going so well; what action, if any, needs to be taken. (See separate document 'Supervision record sheet'.)

### **Limits to support**

- We recognise and promote volunteering as an important part of recovery for users of mental health services. However, the level of support needed for volunteers must not prevent supervisors from carrying out their own role, and delivering an effective service. If this is the case then it may not be the appropriate time for that volunteer to be involved, and they should be supported to find voluntary work elsewhere, if appropriate.

### **Annual review**

- Every volunteer should take part in an annual review, the aim of which is to:-
  - identify and celebrate the their successes and achievements over the year
  - identify and review any difficulties that have arisen
  - review the volunteer's aims and objectives in relation to personal development
  - review the volunteer's role
  - review the effectiveness of the volunteer's supervision and support
  - take any actions as a result of discussion (See 'Annual review record sheet'.

## **Appendix 3: Procedure for Recruitment of Volunteers**

### **Conditions**

The way we recruit volunteers is one of the key ways of ensuring the placement is a good experience for both the volunteer and for Leeds Mind.

We will recruit anyone applying to be a volunteer if we:-

- have an appropriate role
- *or* can develop a role around their specific skills and experience
- are confident they are able to carry out the role
- can provide a proper level of support

Where possible, if we are not able to place someone within Leeds Mind, we will give them information to help them find voluntary work somewhere else.

### **Application procedure**

- Everyone who wants to volunteer must:-
  - Complete an application form
  - Give details of two referees (If possible one referee should be a past employer or a supervisor. The other can be from anyone who has known the applicant for more than 12 months.) We do not intend this to be a barrier to volunteering with us. Anyone who has trouble getting two such referees should be encouraged to discuss this with us, and we will try to find an appropriate way round.
- All prospective volunteers must be interviewed by the project offering the volunteering opportunity.
- Everybody who wants to volunteer must be vetted, appropriately to the role they would like to do.
- Police checks should only be carried out if the specific work a volunteer will be doing requires it, just as would be done for paid staff.
- This process must be handled sensitively, especially as many potential volunteers may be past or current mental health service users.

### **Volunteer agreement**

- All volunteers must sign a volunteer agreement which summarises the key elements of the role and the expectations of each party.
- This agreement has no legal standing. Its purpose is to achieve clarity and a focus for the commitment. It is not binding in any way.

### **Registering as a volunteer**

- Once accepted into a specific volunteering role and attached to a Leeds Mind project, each volunteer must complete registration.
- If a volunteer changes role they must be considered as a fresh applicant, though information on file can be reconsidered. (This is to ensure that once accepted into the organisation a volunteer can not inadvertently take on a role which is inappropriate. It may be, for example, that more detailed references are required when changing role.)

- In special circumstances volunteers may be interviewed by the Volunteer Development Co-ordinator and registered pending a suitable opportunity. In such a case a specific project which takes on the volunteer will still need to interview them.
- All unsuccessful applicants should be told why an opportunity is inappropriate.

Where a volunteer offers new skills and an opportunity to volunteer is constructed around these skills, a clear description of the role must be recorded before volunteering begins.