

THE WESTWAY

Volunteer Policy

Aims of the policy

This policy is for volunteers. It describes why The Westway involves volunteers and how they will be recruited and managed. The policy:

- Provides a framework for involving volunteers.
- Offers a greater understanding of how volunteers are involved in The Westway work, and the nature of the relationship between the The Westway service and its volunteers.
- Provides an introduction to The Westway volunteer management procedures which aim to ensure that volunteers are fully supported during their voluntary work.
- Helps ensure volunteering is accessible to all and that volunteers are treated with fairness and equality.
- Makes sure volunteers have a safe and enjoyable volunteering experience.

The Westway's volunteering service

The Westway's volunteering service supports voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to successfully recruit and match volunteers.

Volunteers are a valuable resource, bringing enthusiasm, skills, experience, flexibility, fresh ideas and new ways of working.

Whether volunteers can offer a regular commitment, one-off, occasional, or seasonal help, every volunteer has a unique contribution to make

What is a 'volunteer'?

A volunteer is someone who gives their time for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward. Volunteers shall not be considered as, or have status as employees of the service.

Our principles

- The Westway recognises that it benefits from volunteer assistance and that this work, in turn, benefits local communities.
- Volunteers bring a fresh approach and a different perspective, one that reflects the views of local and wider communities and includes diversity of knowledge and experience.

- Our volunteers are a vital part of the service and work side-by-side with The Westway paid officers.
- Volunteers provide additional or extended services to support the work of permanent, contracted officers and are not employed to replace paid officers.

Volunteering benefits

Our volunteering opportunities aim to be sociable, and offer new opportunities for learning and skills development. Benefits may include:

- An invitation to workshops, get-togethers and 'thank you' events for volunteers.
- Volunteers will receive induction training when they join the service and any training to support them in their role as agreed with their manager.
- Where appropriate, references will be provided.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Our vision is to build a community in which all can take part and all can take pride. Our Equal Opportunity Policy highlights and fulfils our legal responsibilities and requirements for race, gender and disability. We have also incorporated information and actions in relation to sexual orientation, age and faith and belief, creating a comprehensive equality scheme.

The Westway expects all employees and volunteers to understand and promote our Equal Opportunities Policy in their own roles, including undertaking any training where necessary.

There is no upper age limit for volunteers. We aim to match volunteers of all ages and abilities with suitable volunteering roles.

Lone Working

All volunteers are expected to be familiar with and abide by the provisions of the The Westway lone working requirements which are contained within the The Westway Health and Safety Policy. This states that lone working is to be avoided wherever possible, but outlines safeguards to be adopted where this is unavoidable.

Recruitment of volunteers

The Westway recruits volunteers in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy and volunteer recruitment procedures.

The Westway recruits volunteers to specific roles in the service. Voluntary positions are advertised as required, and volunteers can also register their interest in volunteering at other times. We encourage a wide range of people from different backgrounds.

Volunteers with disabilities and special needs

The Westway positively welcomes applications from volunteers with disabilities and with special needs. We will ensure that positive adjustments are made, wherever possible and practical, to cater for volunteers' access arrangements, specific learning needs, and varying abilities.

Wherever possible The Westway will make special adjustments to the working environment to accommodate and support volunteers with disabilities and special needs.

Applying to volunteer

A key quality for a volunteer is the volunteer's ability to do the tasks required, or their willingness to learn to do them. It is also essential that volunteers want to be part of the service and support the vision and mission of the organisation.

The recruitment process begins with the completion of a simple application form by the prospective volunteer (help can be provided if required).

Prospective volunteers are then invited to an informal meeting/ interview, or a group 'taster' session, where a member of staff and/or other volunteers will talk about the service and volunteering. Volunteers will be able to ask any questions they have. Volunteers are free to bring a friend with them if they find this helpful.

Information about volunteers

In line with The Westway staff recruitment procedures, we ask all volunteers to provide information about themselves, including:

- Proof of identity and address – usually a passport, driving licence, birth certificate, plus a recent utilities bill.
- References – usually one employer's reference or a previous volunteering reference and preferably a character reference. The Westway is aware that some people may have difficulty in finding two referees. In these circumstances we will help volunteers find suitable referees, e.g. their GP, local community leader, a teacher or similar person.
- Volunteers who are not yet 16 years of age must have the written consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering.
- A health questionnaire giving details of any medical concerns and next of kin for health and safety purposes.

Disclosure and Barring Checks

Volunteers who will have regular and direct contact with children or vulnerable adults will be asked to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. There is no cost to the volunteer for this. DBS checks can take a little while; some volunteers in certain circumstances may be able to work under supervision whilst waiting for clearance with prior approval.

Possession of a criminal record will not automatically bar applicants from volunteering at The Westway. The majority of convictions will have no bearing on your ability to volunteer for us. Where a DBS check highlights a potential area of risk, The Westway will discuss this with the volunteer in question, taking into consideration:

- The nature and seriousness of the conviction or other information disclosed.
- How long ago the incident took place.

- Whether there is a pattern of offending behaviour and the extent to which the person in question has been reformed and rehabilitated in the intervening period.

The Westway reserves the right to exclude applicants from volunteering at our discretion following investigation.

Support during volunteering

The Westway aims to ensure that all volunteers enjoy their time with us and that the experience is beneficial for both parties.

Volunteers will have a named person who will be responsible for overseeing their voluntary work, and who will be the main point of contact at all times. Other members of staff will do their best to make themselves available if volunteers need more support at any time during volunteering.

All volunteers will have a more structured support meeting with their supervisor once every six months in order to review their progress and plan ahead.

Feedback from volunteers

The Westway positively welcomes feedback from volunteers and any ideas about improvements to our service. These can be made directly via their supervisor.

Facilities

The Westway volunteers can make use of the kitchen facilities in the volunteer centres.

Dress code

There is no uniform for volunteers, however, we expect all volunteers to dress appropriately.

Code of Conduct

The Westway expects all its employees and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, acting honestly, courteously, and without prejudice. Volunteers are representatives of the service and should perform their tasks in line with The Westway policies.

.Dealing with complaints by volunteers

The service aims to take every reasonable step to resolve any problems that arise during the course of volunteering as quickly and as amicably as possible.

If a volunteer has a complaint about their volunteering, or a colleague, he or she should raise the matter with their supervisor who will discuss the matter with them. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem informally. A volunteer who feels they have been treated unfairly or inconsistently will have an opportunity to attempt to resolve their problems and for the service to learn and prevent a recurrence in the future.

Should the volunteer wish to take the matter further, the volunteer (or their supervisor) may contact the The Westway Manager directly for investigation and resolution. The matter will be dealt with within 14 days. The Manager's decision will be final.

Dealing with complaints about volunteers

If a member of staff, the visiting public, or a volunteer makes a complaint against another volunteer, that volunteer will be informed immediately and involved in discussions as appropriate. All alleged incidents will be fully investigated in line with the service's policy and the results communicated to all relevant parties, including the volunteer themselves. Wherever possible this will be done on an informal basis and every attempt will be made to resolve the matter, including, where appropriate, the offer of further training and support.

If a volunteer is believed to have behaved in any manner that has or could have seriously affected the organisation – for example theft, bullying, violence or sexual abuse – their volunteering will be immediately suspended while the matter is investigated. If the complaint against the volunteer is upheld they will not be permitted to continue volunteering with the service.

Where volunteers feel dissatisfied with the outcome of the processes described above they can appeal to the Manager whose decision will be final.

Voluntary ending of service

In the majority of cases, voluntary service is brought to an end by the volunteer. There will be many reasons for this and it will usually be amicable and pre-arranged. For example, volunteers might decide that they would like to move on to other volunteering opportunities, or a job. In these instances, a short exit interview may be held to enable the service to learn what was enjoyable about the volunteering experience and what could be improved. If possible, when volunteers decide to move on, the service would appreciate as much notice as possible to allow time to conduct the exit interview and find a replacement volunteer.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are required to treat as confidential any information they come into contact with whilst volunteering that relates to the service, its staff, volunteers, donors, partner organisations, policies and practices.

Data protection

To ensure efficient contact with volunteers, volunteer details are kept on file and stored securely. Details will only be used for the express purpose of contacting the volunteer, for contacting next of kin in emergencies, and for providing references if required by the volunteer.

Insurance

The Westway services are covered by Public Liability Insurance, including accidents to the volunteer and any potential injuries which they might accidentally inflict upon staff or visitors whilst volunteering in the service.

Security

All volunteers are required to comply with The Westway security procedures, helping to ensure the general security of the service's buildings, other property and the work environment.

Fire, health and safety

The Westway is committed to a healthy and safe working environment and expects all its employees and volunteers to implement and promote its health and safety policy, endeavouring to consider and integrate health and safety in all activities to safeguard employees, contractors, members of the public, property and the environment. Procedures relating to fire, health and safety will be covered during induction. The Westway has a 'no smoking' policy on all The Westway premises.

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