



Volunteer Policy

Introduction

Volunteers at Pearls Project contribute their skills, personality and experiences to support and advise women involved in sex-working and with addiction issues in Liverpool. Pearls Project believes that volunteers can make a positive difference to the organisation, the community and themselves. As a local voluntary sector organisation, we are committed to enabling and encouraging this process. We understand that people volunteer for many reasons and we value their contribution, commitment and participation.

Recruitment

Pearls Project aims to recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds that reflect the makeup of the local community, and of those who use the services of Pearls Project. We are committed to ensuring that volunteering opportunities are open to everyone and that our recruitment process is fair and transparent at all stages.

Pearls Project currently supports women, and so we only recruit women for our frontline roles that will involve face to face contact with those we work with. We will however consider men for background roles.

We particularly value the personal experience that some of our volunteers may have around issues of addiction but will require that volunteers must have been free from addiction to illegal substances and/or alcohol for two years prior to volunteering for Pearls Project.

Every volunteering opportunity will be accompanied by a clear volunteer role description, and potential volunteers' suitability for the role will be decided in relation to this. We will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers locally or within Pearls Project, which take into account the principles of our Equalities & Diversity Policy. Potential volunteers will be asked to complete an application form, with help given if necessary. Potential volunteers will be invited to have an informal interview with the appropriate person according to the role, and if this is successful, two references will be taken up.

For some volunteer roles, successful completion of core training is a requirement of recruitment. Pearls Project may make a decision not to recruit volunteers or to ask an existing volunteer to cease volunteering at Pearls Project if they work (paid or unpaid) with individuals who use Pearls Project services in a professional environment where this is likely to create a conflict of interest. Pearls Project requests that potential and existing volunteers inform Pearls Project if this situation arises in order that Pearls Project is able to assess the situation and make an informed decision.

All volunteers providing support to vulnerable adults in their role will be required to provide an enhanced DBS check.

Induction and Training

All volunteers will receive a copy of the volunteer information relevant to their position. This will contain a summary of relevant information from the Volunteer Policy, and useful information specific to each role.

There will be a compulsory induction prepared and delivered by the appropriate person to the volunteer role. This will include:

- The role of the volunteer
- Communicating effectively with people who use our service
- Safeguarding
- Boundaries
- Understanding addiction
- A list of relevant Team Members
- Familiarisation with what Pearls provides as a service and hopes to provide in the future.
- Copies of all relevant policies, including this Volunteer Policy
- Essential procedures i.e., timekeeping, record keeping, claiming expenses etc.
- Details of future training plans.
- Other information as appropriate

Pearls Project is committed to providing volunteers with support and developing our training which will enhance and widen skills of our team, and which will benefit both the individuals and Pearls Project. Training will be tailored according to the volunteer role and we ask that volunteers make managers aware of any felt training or support needs. It should be noted that the additional training of volunteers will depend on appropriate and available resources.

Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. Out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed, including refreshments and travel expenses for any travel incurred while they are volunteering. Please do discuss it with your manager first to check before taking a woman out for food or drink to check what our budget will allow.

We accept that some volunteers may have specific mobility needs, or exceptional circumstances, and may therefore need to use a private vehicle or taxi. This must be agreed in advance with Jude McMaster. Car parking fees to the value of the time required to complete the voluntary activity will be reimbursed with receipts. Mileage must be claimed using the relevant form which can be obtained from the Volunteer Manager.

Pearls Project strives to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement but is only able to reimburse childcare and caring expenses in exceptional circumstances. Any such circumstances will need to be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the Volunteer Manager. Where caring expenses are agreed, the volunteer will be responsible for choosing and paying the carer. It is up to the volunteer who they choose to use for caring, but it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that they are declaring their earnings or paying tax and National Insurance. Pearls Project will reimburse caring expenses on production of a receipt. Pearls Project will not pay carers directly.

All reimbursement of volunteer expenses must be agreed in advance with the Volunteer Manager. In order to claim expenses, a Volunteer Expenses form must be completed and given to the Volunteer Manager. Except in the case of mileage claims, volunteers must keep receipts of all expenses and attach these to the expenses claim form. Volunteers will then be asked to sign the

Expenses Form to say that they have received the money. Expenses will be reimbursed as quickly as possible to minimise inconvenience to volunteers.

Amounts over £20 will normally be reimbursed by cheque or electronic transfer into the volunteer's bank account.

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, although Pearls Project would be happy to write to the benefits office if necessary to confirm that the volunteer is only receiving out of pocket expenses.

Volunteers should ensure that they are clear as to what they can and cannot claim for, as expenses will not be reimbursed if they do not fall within this policy or have not been agreed with the Volunteer manager.

Supervision and Support

All office-based volunteers will receive regular supervision. All front line volunteers will receive regular check ins and the opportunity to brief/debrief when needed. They will also be offered regular group supervision meetings, led by an experienced team leader who will regularly speak / meet with them to review their support and training needs.

Volunteers on outreach can call Jude for support or advice for any questions or concerns they have relating to incidents or issues arising while they are on outreach. We will arrange for a stand in person when Jude is off.

Where team members are working remotely, they are responsible to keep their work equipment (laptops, work environment, cars) in good working condition to look after their own health and wellbeing in the place they are working. If additional equipment is needed this can be discussed with a manager. Team Members should always adhere to all Pearls Project confidentiality and data storing policies when working remotely.

Insurance

The organisation has a valid insurance policy which volunteers are welcome to see on request.

All volunteers are covered by Pearls Project's insurance policy whilst they are engaged in agreed work as a volunteer for Pearls Project.

Pearls Project does not currently have a project vehicle. Where a need arises and if a volunteer chooses to use their personal vehicle for carrying out their volunteer tasks (giving lifts to appointments, outreach, visits), this should be discussed with a manager first. If agreed, the volunteer should inform their motor insurance company that they are using their car in the act of volunteering. If the insurance company makes a charge for change of use, then the volunteer may be able to claim any reasonable charge back as expenses. In the event that a volunteer does use their car, they should be aware that any damages to parties directly involved, and to third parties or third party property will be settled between the volunteer's own insurance policy, and the insured party of any other vehicles involved.

Pearls Project has public liability insurance. Pearls Project is not able to provide insurance relating to private motor vehicles as this must be in the vehicles owner's name.

Health & Safety

A copy of the complete Health and Safety policy is held as a separate document, and is available on request.

Problem Solving Procedures

The relationship between the organisation and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the organisation is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to the people who use its service, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service.

If a volunteer is dissatisfied with any aspect of their duties, they should:

1. Initially explain the dissatisfaction to their appropriate manager.
2. If that does not resolve the concern, then a meeting with Jude McMaster will be held.
3. If, after this, the volunteer's dissatisfaction remains unresolved, and we are unable to resolve this, then it would be inappropriate for the volunteer to continue in their voluntary role. They will be informed of this in writing within two weeks of their meeting with the appropriate manager.
4. If the volunteer feels unable to have the initial discussion with their appropriate manager, they can contact a trustee.

If an individual's role as a volunteer does not meet with the organisations' standards, the situation will be managed in the following way:

Serious Issues

There are certain actions which may be deemed serious enough to justify asking a volunteer to cease volunteering for Pearls Project immediately until the concern has been resolved to Pearls Project's satisfaction. These are actions that are deemed to threaten Pearls Project's ability to maintain our agreed standards of service to the people who use our service, or may cause a threat to the safety of the volunteer concerned, other volunteers, employees or people who use our service.

The following are examples of such actions (the list is not complete or exhaustive):

- Refusal to accept and act on reasonable instructions from a member of staff or a volunteer team leader.
- Serious negligence that could or does result in unacceptable loss, damage or injury
- Fighting, assault or threatening / bullying behaviour and/or any violent act
- Theft, fraud or any dishonesty involving Pearls Project, its volunteers, employees, people who use the service or authorised visitors or attempts to commit such offences
- Deliberate or reckless damage to the property of Pearls Project, its volunteers, its employees, people who use the service or authorised visitors
- Being unfit to volunteer through use of alcohol, illegal drugs or other prohibited substances.

Depending on the nature of the issue, the volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Volunteer or Operations Manager who will explain the organisation's concerns. If at this meeting the volunteer cannot refute or explain their actions to the Volunteer or Operations Manager's satisfaction, and no agreement can be reached as to how the volunteer can reach the standards required by Pearls Project, the volunteer will immediately be asked to stop volunteering for Pearls Project. We would confirm this decision in writing, with a full explanation of the reasons behind the decision.

For less serious issues

1. Depending on the nature of the issue the volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Volunteer Manager who will explain the organisations concerns.
2. If this does not resolve the concern within an agreed time period, then a further meeting with the Volunteer or Operations Manager will be convened and a review period agreed.
3. If the person's volunteering still does not meet with our standards by the end of the agreed review period, then we shall have to stop using their services. We would confirm this decision in writing, with a full explanation of the reasons behind the decision.

At all times volunteers will be freely able to state their case, and can have a friend to accompany them.

Complaints Procedures for Volunteers

If a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer or any staff member, they should refer to Pearls Project's Complaints Policy.

Ending the Volunteer Agreement

Apart from ending a volunteer agreement due to incompetence, inappropriate behaviour or unsatisfactory performance, volunteers should provide adequate notice for finishing their volunteering at Pearls Project if they have agreed duties on the current rota.

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

References

Pearls Project will provide a reference after the volunteer has been actively involved with the organisation for three months.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff and will be provided with a copy of the confidentiality policy.

Personal details of staff, volunteers and people who use the service of Pearls Project are treated in the strictest confidence. Information of a confidential nature should not be disclosed to anyone outside Pearls Project, without prior permission from the Manager, and explicit consent of the individual concerned, except in the circumstances set out in the policy.

For more information on anything mentioned in the Volunteer Policy, volunteers can refer to Jude McMaster.

Reviewed By: Jude McMaster

Reviewed Date: 03.09.21

Next Review Date: September 2022