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Volunteer Policy

Introduction

Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS) is a council for voluntary service, (CVS) part of a national network of similar organisations. Our job is to advise and support local, not-for-profit groups. These groups provide all manner of services to the local area and include social clubs, groups advising people who care for a relative at home, advice and activities for people with disabilities or health problems, tenants and residents' associations, and many more.

SAVS believes that: "A volunteer is a person who, free of charge and without duress, contributes their time and skills with the aim of benefiting others in their community".

In line with this, SAVS is committed to involving volunteers in a supportive and mutually beneficial manner. SAVS believes it is imperative that volunteers are not used to replace the employment of paid members of staff.

Purpose

This policy sets out how SAVS intends to support its volunteers. Please refer to the Volunteer Handbook (Appendix 1) and individual policies for further details on specific areas.

The policy also provides a framework for all SAVS staff when considering involving volunteers in their work . If a SAVS Manager is interested in developing a volunteering opportunity, they should contact the Volunteer Centre Manager or Youth Development Manager, who will support them to put together a volunteering role description and register their Opportunity.

This Volunteer Policy:

- Provides an example of good practice for other volunteer involving organisations
- Provides a foundation on which our involvement of volunteers will be based
- Gives a cohesive and consistent approach to ensure that volunteers are fully supported during their volunteering role
- Helps ensure fairness and consistency when involving a diverse group of people.

Being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad-hoc basis .

The Benefits of Involving Volunteers

There are many benefits to involving volunteers at SAVS.

- Volunteers can bring a different perspective to our work, one that reflects the



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- views of the local community
- Volunteers bring credibility to SAVS – giving their time for free suggests that the work we do is of value to the local population
- Volunteers can help to extend services we currently offer
- Involving Volunteers in our work helps to increase our diversity as an organisation ensuring we are more effective in meeting the needs of our members

The Benefits for Volunteers

- Volunteer opportunities can provide new challenges and enable people to learn new skills
- Volunteering can be a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities
- Volunteers can 'give something back' to their local community by donating their time and skills
- Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding
- Volunteering can improve health and wellbeing

Principles

This Volunteer Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- SAVS will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to SAVS work.
- Volunteers have the right to express their views within the organisational structure.
- SAVS does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- SAVS expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- SAVS recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- SAVS is committed to equal opportunities in relation to the recruitment, selection, training and involvement of volunteers.
- All volunteers, including Trustees will sign the Volunteer Agreement.

Practice Guidelines

Southend Association of Voluntary Services is committed to good practice when supporting its volunteers. The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of volunteering. The documents referred to are provided in the Volunteers Handbook (Appendix 1).



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Recruitment

Our methods of recruitment will be regularly monitored to ensure they comply with the guidelines laid out in our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to find out what they would like to do, their skills, suitability and how best their potential might be realised. Volunteers will be registered with the Volunteer Centre before commencing their volunteering with SAVS. Volunteers will be asked to provide two independent character references and complete a four to six week trial period.

If the chosen volunteer role is deemed not to be suitable at any time, the volunteer will be given reasons for this and be offered the opportunity to look at alternative voluntary roles if appropriate.

Volunteer Agreements and Role Descriptions

Volunteers will be given a written outline of the specific work they will be undertaking (Role Description). If they decide to undertake this role they will then be given a Welcome Pack including a Volunteer Handbook (Appendix 1), which outlines what SAVS undertakes to provide for them. Having read the handbook volunteers will then be asked to sign the Volunteer Agreement Form which is found on the back page of the handbook. The Volunteer Agreement Form is not intended to be a legally binding contract; it is simply a set of guidelines to help the volunteer feel supported and clearer about their responsibilities.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

SAVS is firmly committed to ensuring equal opportunities and diversity in all areas of its work. We aim to develop and maintain an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress in line with our Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy (See Volunteer Handbook – Appendix 1).

Expenses

All volunteers will have their travel and other approved expenses reimbursed. People volunteering a minimum of four hours per day will be able to claim expenses for lunch (for details see the Volunteers Handbook).

Induction and training

All volunteers will receive an induction into SAVS and their own area of work. Opportunities for training and development will be made available for volunteers where appropriate for their role. The same in-house training opportunities will be made available to volunteers as staff.



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Support and Supervision

Volunteers will be supported and supervised by a named contact person (Supervisor). This person will provide the volunteer with regular feedback, the opportunity to discuss future plans and training opportunities, as well as a chance to discuss any issues that may arise.

Health and Safety

SAVS will, as far as is practical, care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with copies of relevant health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training in their role. Risk assessments will be carried out for activities located away from the SAVS Centre.

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the organisation's public liability insurance policy while engaged in approved work for SAVS.

Resolving Concerns

SAVS aims to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage. For a copy of the Complaints Procedure and Disciplinary Procedure please refer to the volunteer handbook.

Confidentiality

By signing the volunteer agreement form, volunteers agree to follow the principles explained in the statement of confidentiality in the volunteer handbook.

If you would like this policy in an alternative format please contact SAVS and we will do our best to assist you.

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Appendix One

Southend Association of Voluntary Services

Volunteer Handbook



SAVS Centre, 29-31 Alexandra Street, Southend-on-Sea. SS1 1BW

Tel: 01702 356000 Fax: 01702 356011 Email: info@savs-southend.co.uk Website: www.savs-southend.org/volunteering

Registered charity No: 1063655 Company limited by guarantee No: 03351855



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Dear

Welcome to the Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS) Volunteer Handbook.

The contents of this pack form part of your induction to the work of SAVS. It should give you information about our work, make you aware of our policies and statements and provide you with the tools you need to ensure a smooth transition into your new voluntary role.

SAVS often receives requests for help from individuals in the community. People contact us because they want to find out where to go for help, or someone contacts us on their behalf, such as a social worker, nurse or a relative. As a volunteer you can do much to enrich the lives of others. You can bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm and a caring spirit. You can contribute in a very real way to your community. We hope you enjoy your time as a volunteer at SAVS

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask us.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Middlemast

Emily Middlemast
Volunteer Centre Manager

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Rights & Responsibilities of Volunteers

SAVS believes that:

“A volunteer is a person who, free of charge and without duress, contributes their time and skills with the aim of benefiting others in their community.”

We believe that our volunteers have certain rights & responsibilities. These are as follows:

Rights of Volunteers

- ◆ All volunteers should be treated equally.
- ◆ Volunteers should have the right to know why they were not accepted for a voluntary role, as far as possible.
- ◆ Volunteers should be responded to promptly.
- ◆ Volunteers should know who to go to with any problems.
- ◆ Volunteers should have adequate insurance cover.
- ◆ Volunteers should have appropriate training and support and be appreciated.
- ◆ Volunteers should have the opportunity to be involved in the organisation and contribute to decision making.
- ◆ Volunteers should have reasonable out of pocket expenses reimbursed.
- ◆ Volunteers work should be reviewed as necessary, and they should be given the chance to develop skills where possible.
- ◆ Every task the volunteer undertakes should be something the volunteer wants to do and is of benefit to the community.
- ◆ Paid staff should be committed to the value of the volunteer’s work and there should be general agreement within the agency about the nature and purpose of volunteer involvement.
- ◆ Volunteers should have safe working conditions.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

Just as volunteers can expect to be treated in a certain way, they also have a duty to:

- ◆ Give the commitment they know suits their availability.
- ◆ Arrive when expected and be punctual.
- ◆ Be reliable and trustworthy.
- ◆ Work within the aims and objectives of the organisation.



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- ◆ Be honest if there are any problems.
- ◆ Respect confidentiality, and those they work with.
- ◆ Treat all people equally.
- ◆ Attend relevant training and development review meetings.
- ◆ If claiming benefits, volunteers should be aware of their responsibility to inform Job Centre Plus of their voluntary work. Please talk to your named supervisor for further information.

The information in this welcome pack, including policies and statements, aims to uphold these rights and responsibilities.

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SAVS Volunteers

SAVS is committed to involving volunteers in a supportive and mutually beneficial manner.

We aim to provide you with clear guidelines regarding your volunteer role and responsibilities.

The framework for this is a Volunteer's Policy (You should have a copy of this in your welcome pack). This outlines:

1. The Benefits of Involving Volunteers
2. The Benefits for Volunteers
3. The Principles of the Policy
4. Practice Guidelines
5. Recruitment Methods
6. Volunteer Agreements and Role Descriptions
7. Equal Opportunities and Diversity
8. Expenses
9. Induction and Training
10. Support and Supervision
11. Health and Safety
12. Insurance
13. Resolving Concerns
14. Confidentiality

SAVS has a responsibility to:

- ◆ Undertake references on all volunteers
- ◆ Undertake criminal records checks if appropriate
- ◆ Provide the opportunity for volunteers to gain a meaningful experience
- ◆ Provide expenses, references, supervision, training and support as appropriate.

All information held will be treated in the strictest confidence and is subject to the Data Protection Act.

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Guidelines for Volunteers

Your supervisor will give you a guided tour of the SAVS building and introduce you to our Staff and Volunteers. It is hoped that you will find the following information helpful during your time at SAVS.

SAVS telephone number is 01702 356000 – If you are unable to make your arranged volunteering time it is important that you call your Supervisor direct or SAVS Reception on the above telephone number and let them know. We would appreciate as much notice as possible to enable us to make alternative arrangements.

SAVS is open between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday – Thursday and 9am-4.30pm on Fridays. The main door will be open during these hours. Outside these hours you should come and go via the alternative front entrance.

Parking facilities are limited at SAVS. Free roadside parking can be found a short distance further along Alexandra Street. There is a pay and display car park next door to SAVS and Southend Bus and Southend Central Train Stations are both a short walk away.

To comply with fire regulations, it is important that you sign in (on arrival) and out (on departure) at Reception and you make yourself aware of the fire procedures.

Tea and coffee making facilities can be found on the second floor. Please feel free to help yourself.

The Café is open to everyone (if you are volunteering over 4 hours don't forget to ask your supervisor for a voucher).

A Who's Who at SAVS can be found on the S drive.

SAVS website is a useful source of information www.savs-southend.org

Above all remember if you have a question, just ask!

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Health and Safety

When you are volunteering there are several guidelines and points concerning your role and health and safety to bear in mind. If you have a health and safety enquiry please speak to your Supervisor.

Is the task appropriate?

SAVS will only ask you to carry out requests that we feel are appropriate. However, if you do not agree, there is NO pressure to take the task on and you should feel free to say so.

Risk assessments will be carried out for projects outside of SAVS that volunteers may be involved in

Using the criteria above, a task is considered appropriate if:

- ◆ A volunteer is available and happy to carry out the task
- ◆ There is no risk of being in physical danger
- ◆ The volunteer is properly trained to do the task
- ◆ The volunteer has appropriate insurance cover

The following list of do's and don'ts are for your own safety and the safety of those you work with:

When the office is open to members of the public, two members of staff/volunteers shall be in attendance when possible.

Windows and doors should be kept locked when out of office and personal items such as bags placed out of public view and where they will not cause an accident.

No personal addresses or telephone numbers should be given out without the permission of the person concerned.

Doors to the building should be kept locked and not opened when working outside of normal hours.

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No trailing wires are to be left unsecured.

Equipment should be used in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines.

Correct seating will be provided for working at a VDU

Regular breaks should be taken in working hours, especially where VDU work is concerned

Fire Safety

If you hear the fire alarm (and you haven't been told it is a drill) please exit the building calmly, by the nearest fire exit. Assemble in the car park next to SAVS and make your self known to the designated fire marshall for your floor and your supervisor.

Accidents

If you have an accident you should seek medical attention immediately – no matter how small you think the injury is.

Any accidents must be reported to the office as soon as possible. The details will be entered in SAVS Accident Log Book which is kept in the reception area of the SAVS Centre.

Should any damage or breakages to a person's property occur as a result of your volunteering, please let your supervisor know *immediately* so they can take charge of the situation.

IT IS ALWAYS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT TASKS ARE CARRIED OUT WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY AS A PRIORITY

A First Aid Kit and accident book is kept in SAVS Centre reception office. Additional First Aid Kits are placed in the café and in the kitchen on the second floor. A list of qualified first aiders is kept in the reception information folder.



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Drugs & Alcohol

SAVS does not tolerate anyone reporting for work whilst under the influence of, or adversely affected by alcohol or drugs. It is not permitted for alcohol or drugs to be consumed whilst on duty at SAVS.

Under the influence means knowingly to have any alcohol or drugs in the body.

Adversely affected means being over the UK drink drive limit.

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Complaints Procedure

While we hope that volunteers will be happy being a part of SAVS, we do realise that sometimes problems do arise. If problems cannot be settled informally, the following procedure will be used.

1. We believe that volunteers have the right to make complaints or criticisms about anything that causes them concern during the course of their volunteering. All complaints will be considered carefully and investigated fully.
2. In the first instance any volunteer wishing to make a complaint should raise the matter with their supervisor, unless the complaint relates to the supervisor. In such circumstances, the procedure would go straight to stage 3. The supervisor will seek to investigate and resolve the issue at this stage.
3. If this is not possible, or the volunteer does not feel satisfied with the outcome, the matter will be referred to SAVS Chief Officer for further discussion and a decision. If the Chief Officer's decision is disputed, an appeal against it will be considered by a panel of two assigned members of SAVS Executive Committee and an independent person such as a representative of another voluntary organisation. The independent person will be selected in consultation with both parties. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied by a person of their choice to the meeting.
4. The panel's decision will be final

Each stage of the procedure will be covered by SAVS confidentiality policy and will only be discussed with those immediately concerned.

Procedure if your Volunteering doesn't meet our standards

SAVS aims at all times to ensure that reasonable standards are set and understood by all its volunteers. We aim to treat volunteers fairly in relation to complaints about his or her performance/conduct and to ensure that no action is taken without a full understanding of the relevant facts and circumstances.

If your volunteering doesn't meet our standards, and it is after your probationary period, your supervisor will:

1. Arrange a meeting at which the areas in need of improvement will be reviewed.
2. Any reasons why standards are not being reached will be addressed and any resulting support or training needs will be arranged.



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3. A further meeting will be arranged after an agreed period of time to assess the situation.
4. If your volunteering doesn't meet our standards following this process, an appointment will be made with The Volunteer Centre Manager (if required) to look at alternative Volunteering Opportunities which may be more suited to your needs/skills.

Other than for serious offences (breach of confidentiality, dishonesty etc.), disciplinary procedures will only be used where normal supervisory discussions have failed.

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Expenses Policy

SAVS believes that all volunteers are entitled to have all reasonable out of pocket expenses reimbursed.

Travel Expenses

You are entitled to claim your transport costs to and from your placement and for other travel incurred in the course of your voluntary work. Fares on public transport will be reimbursed on production of tickets. If you have a travel pass, a photocopy of your pass will be taken in place of receipts.

If a car is used, a mileage rate of 40p per mile will be reimbursed. If you incur car parking expenses as part of your volunteering, these will be reimbursed, but please keep the tickets. Please note that parking fines will not be reimbursed.

Telephone Expenses

A rate of 10p may be paid for each phone call made to SAVS. Volunteers are asked to keep calls to an absolute minimum and must relate to your volunteering to qualify for reimbursement.

You may need to call us if we have left a message asking you to do so relating to the allocation of tasks. Also, you may need to call us if you have agreed to a task but then cannot make it. In this situation, it is very important that you let us know so we can tell the person who was expecting you.

Lunch Expenses

All people volunteering over 4 hours in one session are entitled to a Lunch Expense Voucher. Please ask your named supervisor for a voucher.

Other Expenses

All other expenses not detailed above must be authorised by the named supervisor in advance.

It is essential that ALL volunteers claim their expenses. Please complete a Volunteer Expense Form (in your Welcome Pack) and attach any receipts and/or parking tickets to it before giving it to your supervisor for authorisation.

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Statement of Confidentiality

This policy aims to ensure that volunteers understand the meaning and the importance of maintaining confidentiality in their work.

When someone gives SAVS confidential information, they need to be sure that we will not tell anyone else without their permission. It is also important for our work that people feel confident about giving us this information, as it enables us to offer the most appropriate service to meet people's needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY MEANS NOT DISCUSSING INFORMATION OUTSIDE OF THE ORGANISATION. IF A VOLUNTEER HAS ANY CONCERNS ABOUT INFORMATION THEY RECEIVE OR ABOUT A SITUATION THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED, THESE MATTERS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THEIR SUPERVISOR OR A MEMBER OF SAVS STAFF. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT A VOLUNTEER FEELS ABLE TO DO THIS, AS THIS IS NOT A BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY.

Volunteers may be placed in a position where they have access to confidential records and personally sensitive information. It is important to respect these confidences.

Statement on Smoking

In line with Government legislation, the SAVS Centre is a non-smoking building and therefore we respectfully request that all staff members and volunteers shall not smoke at any time while on the premises. This includes the areas in doorways at the front and rear of the building.

Insurance Cover

Volunteers are covered under SAVS Public Liability Insurance. Full details are available from the Finance Manager.

Intellectual Property

It is important for all Staff and Volunteers to be aware of SAVS position concerning the key principles of ownership, protection and exploitation of Intellectual Property.

All Intellectual Property , including copyright, created by Staff and Volunteers will, in the first instance, belong to SAVS. For further details please refer to SAVS IP policy.

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Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

We recognise that Britain is a pluralistic society. It is diverse in race, culture, creed and interests. We are aware that individuals and groups of people are sometimes discriminated against in unjustifiable ways, both directly and indirectly. Consequently, we welcome legislation, which aims to put this right.

Statement of intent

We declare that it is our intent to ensure;

- a) that recruitment, training and treatment for those who work within our organisation, either paid or voluntary, and
- b) that access to the benefits, facilities and services we provide, are available to all - without discrimination.

We will ensure that no-one is disadvantaged in any of these matters by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. We will work to ensure that there is no discrimination on grounds of race, colour, nationality – including citizenship or ethnic or national origins, disability, age, gender, sexual identity, married or single status, or religious affiliation, where any of these cannot be shown to be a requirement of the job or office concerned.

Positive action

It is also our intention to take positive action, within the law and as the law encourages, ensuring equality of opportunity and of treatment on the matters specified above throughout our sphere of influence, in so far as it lies within our power.

We will monitor our progress in implementing this Policy.

Implementation

We look to all our staff, volunteers, Committee, individual and group members, to abide by and promote this Policy. Any grievance or any matter relating to it should be taken up in the first instance with your supervisor or alternatively one of the Trustees who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the Policy.

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Volunteer Agreement

SAVS policies on health and safety, what to do if you have a complaint or are unhappy, procedures if your volunteering does not meet our standards, expenses & statements on equal opportunities and confidentiality - all form an integral part of this agreement as does SAVS statement of volunteer's rights & responsibilities.

I have received and had explained to me copies of the above policies and statements.

While I am a volunteer with SAVS I understand that I shall be adequately insured for the duties I am asked to perform.

I understand that I am entitled to the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, and I know how to claim reimbursement.

I have been allocated a named supervisor and I understand their role.

I will provide the necessary details for references and CRB checks as required.

I understand that I shall complete a probationary period of 4 – 6 weeks (as agreed with my supervisor). During this time my supervisor and I will decide whether I am suited to this volunteer role. In the event of the decision being made that I am not suited to this role, I shall be given any reasons for the decision taken and offered advice on alternative volunteering opportunities

I shall be entitled to regular reviews of my volunteering for SAVS.

I understand that this agreement is binding in honour only and is not intended to be legally binding or to create a contract of employment.

I understand that I am free to cease volunteering with SAVS at any time, although I undertake to try to give reasonable notice of my intentions to end this arrangement.

I have read and understood SAVS policies & statements & I confirm my agreement to abide by them.

Volunteer's signature:

Supervisor's signature:

Date: