

## Volunteer Engagement Policy

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Deaf Children's Society is committed to ensuring that all our volunteering activities demonstrate best practice. Volunteers are central to NDCS and to the achievement of our mission. Volunteers make a significant difference to our work and we aim to ensure that NDCS Volunteering is a positive and fulfilling experience.
- 1.2 We recognise that people volunteer for many reasons and we value their time, commitment, enthusiasm and involvement. Their contributions enhance the work we do and do not replace the work of paid staff.
- 1.3 This document describes the policy framework for all NDCS staff when engaging with volunteers or considering involving volunteers in their work. It is essential staff manage volunteers when they involve them in different roles across the organisation.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with supporting policies and guidance documents referred to throughout the document.

- 1.5 Details of volunteer engagement, are recorded, managed and stored securely in accordance with the NDCS Data Protection policy using our CRM database (VIKI). A volunteer may request a copy of any information held on their record at any time

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 NDCS defines volunteering as:

Any activity which is carried out by an individual or group of individuals, without payment, for the mutual benefit of NDCS, its members and those undertaking the activity<sup>1</sup>

- 2.2 However, not all people who support the organisation without payment are volunteers. Like other charities, to decide on the appropriate support, resources and management processes required, we make the distinction between:

- a) volunteers who are people that do things on behalf of the organisation
- b) supporters who are people that do things in aid of the organisation

- 2.3 For volunteering to be sustainable and worthwhile, we aim to offer rewarding volunteering opportunities whilst remaining focused on our organisational goals and objectives. This means volunteer programmes benefit both us and the volunteers involved. The extent of the benefit to the organisation and the volunteers themselves varies according to the programme objectives. So again, to decide on the appropriate support, resources and management processes required, we consider the extent to which:

- 2.4 The volunteer programme can benefit the organisation – where a volunteer performs activities in support of our service delivery or management. This is sometimes referred to as task replacement. Having decided we need a task completing, we would otherwise need to pay someone to do it but we choose a volunteer because of the added value they provide (eg. personal experience of deafness, emotional connection, membership of a specific community, etc).

- 2.5 The volunteer programme can benefit the volunteer – where a volunteer performs activities in support of their own development. At NDCS, this is targeted at deaf young people and adults (14 – 25 year olds) to support their transition into adult life. For example, by providing them with volunteering opportunities that develop useful knowledge, skills, confidence and attitudes to help them get paid work, progress into higher education, develop meaningful relationships or maintain their emotion health and wellbeing.

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<sup>1</sup> See [NDCS Volunteering: The Strategy](#)

### **3. Involving volunteers**

- 3.1 Volunteers bring with them a wealth of knowledge and life experience as well as time, passion, energy and enthusiasm. They contribute valuable alternative perspectives to our work and enhance the quality of the services we delivery.
- 3.2 We engage volunteers in a variety of roles across the organisation to meet our business objectives. Volunteers are involved in both service delivery and support roles that directly and indirectly help deaf children, young people and their families.
- 3.3 At any one time, a volunteer may be involved in more than one programme or have more than one role within a programme. Volunteer details and assignments must be recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI).
- 3.4 Volunteering offers important opportunities for both community and membership involvement at all levels of, and in different capacities within, the organisation.
- 3.5 Our beneficiaries can also directly benefit through volunteering. Such programmes provide direct or indirect benefit to deaf children and young people, but the primary focus is on learning and development gained through volunteering that supports transition into adult life. We may develop opportunities for deaf young adults to volunteer at NDCVS or work with other agencies to develop deaf-friendly opportunities elsewhere.
- 3.6 See the NDCS Volunteer Recruitment, Selection and Induction Policy for details of how we identify volunteer opportunities and recruit and select volunteers.
- 3.7 See the NDCS Students Work Experience Procedures for guidance on involving young people under 18 years old on work experience.
- 3.8 Recruitment, selection and induction data is recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI).

### **4. Induction, training and development**

- 4.1 All NDCS Volunteers must have an induction into NDCS and their role. This ensures volunteers understand how their contributions support the mission and goals of the organisation, as well as enabling them to perform tasks effectively, in line with our values and to a high standard.
- 4.2 Induction varies according to the needs of the role. It may only involve a briefing, email or conversation (eg. for a cheerer at the London Marathon) or it could be a detailed process to comply with external regulation (eg. for Youth Support Volunteers supervising children at Ofsted events)

- 4.3 Appropriate initial training must be offered if the role requires this, and on-going learning and development needs should be regularly reviewed and addressed through support, supervision and training.
- 4.4 See the NDCS Volunteer Recruitment, Selection and Induction Policy for details of how we induct new volunteers.
- 4.5 Induction, training and development is recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI).

## **5. Support and supervision**

- 5.1 Every volunteer has a named supervisor who can provide day-to-day support in line with the NDCS Volunteer Support, Supervision and Recognition Policy.
- 5.2 Volunteers in on-going volunteering roles are offered regular scheduled support and supervision sessions with their supervisor. Volunteers at one-off events receive support and supervision at the time of each event.
- 5.3 See the NDCS Volunteer Support, Supervision and Recognition Policy for details of how we support and supervise volunteers.
- 5.4 Support and supervision is recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI).

## **6. Confidentiality**

- 6.1 Volunteers are supported to comply with current confidentiality and data protection legislation with regard to any information obtained whilst volunteering with us.
- 6.2 Volunteers are expected to comply with our guidance and procedures on confidentiality, data protection and information sharing.

## **7. Equality & Diversity**

- 7.1 We are committed to equality and diversity in all aspects of our work. We recognise the value and positive contributions made to the effective delivery of services from paid and voluntary teams that reflect the whole community, offering different perspectives and experiences.
- 7.2 Volunteers are expected to comply with our policies on equality and diversity.

## **8. Health & safety**

- 8.1 All volunteers are obliged to comply with Health and Safety legislation and report any issues.

- 8.2 Volunteers are provided with health and safety training appropriate to their role and are expected to comply with our health and safety policies.
- 8.3 If a volunteer is pregnant or becomes pregnant whilst volunteering with us, their supervisor must undertake an appropriate risk assessment of their volunteering activities.
- 8.4 If a volunteer arrives with or develops a long-term health condition or disability their supervisor must undertake an appropriate risk assessment of their support and access needs for the prospective or actual volunteering activities.

## **9. Criminal convictions**

- 9.1 Given the nature of our work, it is essential we have clear and robust processes in place that effectively screen volunteers during recruitment and selection and throughout their time with us. At the same time, we undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any person on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- 9.2 We are committed to the safety and welfare of children and young people, whilst enabling the skills, experiences, interest and enthusiasm of volunteers to be maximised for the benefit of the organisation.
- 9.3 For regulated<sup>2</sup> volunteer roles involving supervising children, if a volunteer discloses that they have a conviction or we become aware of this during our vetting and barring processes, the recruiting manager or supervisor must undertake an appropriate risk assessment of their prospective or actual volunteering activities.
- 9.4 See the NDCS Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy for details of recruiting volunteers with criminal convictions who work with children.
- 9.5 Vetting and barring is recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI) and in accordance with the disclosure agencies for the four countries of the UK and data protection regulations.

## **10. Insurance**

- 10.1 We are committed to making sure we have appropriate insurance in place for our volunteers and volunteering assignments.
- 10.2 It is the responsibility of a volunteer's supervisor to know what work the volunteer will undertake and, where necessary, confirm appropriate insurance cover with the Head of Volunteering and, if the activities are outside the normal work of NDCS, the Director of Finance and Administration.

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<sup>2</sup> As defined by Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended). See NDCS Safeguarding Policy and Guidance. This is distinct from activity regulated by Ofsted under the Residential Holidays Scheme for Disabled Children

10.3 It is the volunteer's responsibility to inform their insurance company if they are using their car whilst volunteering.

## **11. Recognition**

11.1 The enormous contributions made by volunteers to the work of NDCS is regularly recognised and celebrated, both formally and informally.

11.2 See the NDCS Volunteer Support, Supervision and Recognition Policy for details of how we recognise volunteers' contributions and achievements.

## **12. Reasonable Expectation**

12.1 Our expectations of volunteers are contained in the volunteer agreement published in our Volunteer Handbook. Although it is not a formal contract, the agreement sets out what volunteers can expect from us and what we hope to receive from them.

12.2 All volunteers are expected to work at all times within the NDCS policies and procedures appropriate to their role.

## **13. Expenses**

13.1 Volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of undertaking volunteering activities for us. Volunteers can claim expenses in line with the NDCS Travel, Subsistence & Entertainment policy.

13.2 Volunteers not wishing to claim their expenses may donate them back to the organisation. We provide guidance on the appropriate, cost effective way to do this.

## **14. Solving Problems**

14.1 We realise that occasionally problems do occur and we are committed to making sure a fair and transparent process is available to resolve any issue.

14.2 See the NDCS Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers for details of how we manage issues that may arise.

14.3 Problem solving is recorded and managed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI) with sensitive information restricted to appropriate staff.

## **15. End of volunteer placement**

15.1 If a volunteer wishes to leave their role, they are encouraged to give their supervisor as much notice as possible. They are offered an exit interview (face-to-face, telephone or Skype) with their supervisor or sent an exit feedback form to complete and return.

- 15.2 Volunteers have a high level of commitment to the organisation and details of our other volunteering opportunities should be discussed with them when they leave a specific role.
- 15.3 Circumstances sometimes mean a volunteer may need to take a break from volunteering (eg. to study or during pregnancy). Volunteers are encouraged to discuss this with their supervisor with a view to returning at a later date.
- 15.4 Volunteer performance issues or behaviour sometimes mean a volunteer opportunity is withdrawn without notice. Volunteer supervisors must discuss this with the volunteer and provide a clear explanation for the decision.
- 15.5 See the NDCS Volunteer Support, Supervision and Recognition Policy for details of how we provide references for volunteers..
- 15.6 We aim to give volunteers as much notice as possible if their volunteering role is no longer required.
- 15.7 End of volunteering information is recorded and reviewed using the organisation's CRM database (VIKI).