

## **Patient and Carer Experience team Volunteer Charter**

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP) recognises the significant and valuable role that volunteers play in supporting us to achieve our aims.

This charter reflects our commitment to ensuring the volunteer is integrated into the heart of CWP in a constructive and rewarding way and that all volunteers are treated in an equal, fair, and just manner.

This Charter sets out to provide guidance to staff and volunteers and outline procedures and support mechanisms available to volunteers. It defines the term “volunteer” and provides a framework of best practice which we will endeavour to follow when appointing, managing, and supporting our volunteers.

### **Definition of the Relationship**

Volunteers are individuals or groups who offer their time, experience, knowledge, and skills without financial gain beyond reimbursement of expenses; helping us to achieve our aims.

There is no contract of employment between CWP and the volunteer, but CWP regards volunteers as a valuable resource and is committed to providing support and recognition of their input. Volunteers are supported through the provision of resources necessary to complete their duties, induction and appropriate training and a supervision commitment. Volunteer contributions are recognised through written references (where appropriate), invitation to special events and opportunities to feedback to the development of volunteer management at CWP. Volunteers have the right to refuse any request made of them and are not bound by contract but are obliged to volunteer in line with the Volunteer Charter

### **Commitment of the Volunteer**

CWP expects volunteers to behave in a manner which reflects positively on the organisation and to promote the key organisational messages where possible. CWP expects volunteers to execute agreed duties, unless otherwise informed.

CWP expects volunteers to be supportive of staff, other volunteers and of the CWP ethos and aims.

We would ask that all volunteers volunteering on a regular basis to please, where possible, give us four weeks’ notice if they are considering leaving their volunteering

role. We also ask that volunteers attending irregular events or skills training please give us at least one week's notice if you are not able to attend a scheduled event.

## Principles

This Volunteer Charter is underpinned by the following principles:

- CWP will endeavour to ensure volunteers are properly integrated into its organisational structure, that they are kept abreast of organisational developments and that necessary mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to our work.
- CWP will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- CWP recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development opportunities and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs.
- CWP expects staff to work positively with volunteers.

## Recruitment and Selection

CWP recruitment and selection of volunteers is designed to ensure that we recruit volunteers who are suitable for the role they would like to do:

The following minimum requirements will apply to all participants who are seeking to volunteer actively; they will.

- be adults, over the age of 18 (*with the exception of some specified Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and our 0-19-year-old services, this will include activities which require involvement from children and young people under the age of 18.*)
- be the subject of an interview process to determine their skills, aspirations, and pathway.
- be the subject of personal reference checks (excludes family members).
- be subject to an occupational health medical assessment.
- be subject to a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check which **is free of charge** to all volunteers.
- for certain activities, be a person who accesses CWP services or carer (or have recent experience within the last 3 years of being a person who has accessed CWP services or carer)
- CWP will provide volunteer role descriptions which outline duties and responsibilities.
- Prior to appointment, volunteers are invited to engage in a two-way discussion of the proposed role including its requirements and expectations with a view to assessing mutual suitability.
- Commencement of the volunteering opportunity is subject to either a relevant Criminal Record Disclosure or reference clearance.

- Support, guidance, and supervision are provided as appropriate.

### **Induction and Training**

If an individual is accepted to be a volunteer, they will be required to attend.

- a full day Corporate Mandatory Training session (and appropriate refresher sessions)
- a 'local induction' into the service or process they are volunteering for.
- Expected to have regular meetings with either their service supervisor or the relevant Participation or Engagement Worker. This can either be in a one to one or a group setting.

### **Support and Recognition**

All volunteers will have a named supervisor responsible for the management of their work, who is there to provide guidance and assistance. Those engaged in more sustained volunteering will have more formal supervision sessions at agreed intervals. These sessions shall be conducted via email, phone or face-to-face as appropriate and agreed.

Supervising staff will review the volunteering placement as often as required, with the aim of ensuring that recognition keeps apace with role development. CWP is happy to provide a confirmation of contribution for volunteers who have given a minimum of a full week of their time or a reference for those contributing over longer, sustained periods.

### **Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

CWP is committed to promoting equal opportunities. Volunteering opportunities at CWP are open to all regardless of age, race, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or maternity. CWP recognises the positive benefits a diverse volunteer pool can bring to the organisation and is committed to ensuring our recruitment and selection procedure reflects this.

### **Disabled Volunteers**

CWP promotes diversity in all areas of volunteering  
Disability should not be a barrier to volunteering

### **Volunteer Expenses**

It is CWP' policy that volunteers should not be out of pocket for their contributions,

therefore, we are happy to reimburse reasonable receipted travel and subsistence costs. CWP asks volunteers to keep expenses to a reasonable and necessary level. Below is some guidance of what constitutes reasonable expenses and the procedure for claiming them

If volunteers have any queries with regards to expenses, they should consult the Volunteer Manager prior to any commitment being made.

### Procedure for Claiming Expenses

CWP will make payments to reimburse the reasonable travel and subsistence costs incurred by CWP volunteers as follows:

- Public transport (actual cost of travel, supported by ticket or receipt)
- Private car (at the agreed current rate per mile)
- Parking costs (actual cost, supported by ticket or receipt)
- Bicycle rate (at the agreed current rate per mile)
- Reasonable adjustments for travel can be arranged in some circumstances and should be discussed with service supervisor or the Participation and Engagement officer.

Volunteers for CWP are covered by the organisation's Public Liability Insurance. We endeavour to ensure that any events which volunteers are asked to attend on behalf CWP are safe and accessible. This is achieved through the prior completion of risk assessments at CWP' organised events and in some cases written confirmation of appropriate insurance cover at third party organised events.

We ask that all volunteers organising an event for the public address Health and Safety issues as a matter of course. If you have any questions about this matter, please speak to the Volunteer Manager in the first instance.

### Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the organisation.

## Problem Solving Procedure

Volunteers will not be subject to CWP disciplinary procedures nor have access to CWP grievance procedures, both of which are for employees only. Although CWP takes seriously its duty of care towards its volunteers, volunteers do not have any legal rights unless they can prove that they are in fact employees, or that the organisation has been negligent in its duty of care towards the volunteer.

### If a volunteer has a complaint

#### Stage 1 – Initial complaint:

If you have a problem with or a grievance against, a member of staff, CWP or another volunteer, this should be discussed with the Volunteer Manager. If the complaint is about the Volunteer Manager, then the matter should be referred to the Patient and Carer Manager. During this discussion meeting you can be accompanied by a nominated person of your choice. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, then you should proceed to stage 2.

#### Stage 2 - In writing

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, you should make a formal complaint in writing to the Volunteer Manager (or Patient and Carer Manager). Any written complaint should be made within 1 month from your initial complaint and you should expect a written response from the organisation within two weeks of receipt of your letter.

#### Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, then you can appeal to Associate Director of Patient and Carer Experience. You can have a nominated person present with you at this meeting. The Associate Director will respond within 1 month of your appeal and the decision is final.

### If someone complains about a you as volunteer

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives you the volunteer the opportunity to be told why a complaint has arisen, the opportunity to state your case, and the chance to appeal.

Sometimes minor issues can arise during volunteering, such as about how a volunteer is fitting into the team or about not being able to meet the required standards when undertaking tasks, or about reliability.

Such issues would usually come up during regular supervision and would hopefully be resolved without resorting to formal procedures.

## Problem Solving Procedure

### Stage 1 – Oral discussion

The first step involves discussion between you and the Volunteer Manager to discuss any external factors influencing your ability to carry out tasks, your behaviour or attitude. We would then identify goals that will help you to fulfil your role, and offer extra support, supervision, and training where necessary. We would agree a deadline for reviewing the situation. If the complaint was raised by someone else, we will keep them informed of the measures we are taking to rectify the situation.

### Stage 2 – Written warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, then the Volunteer Manager will issue you with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. You will be given the opportunity to state your case either to the Volunteer Manager or the Patient and Carer manager. If you wish, you may be accompanied by a person of your choice.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set, and help offered. However, if at this point, we decide to ask you to leave, you would be given the opportunity to appeal. Please be assured that a decision to ask a volunteer to leave would be a last resort.

### Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal

If you have been asked to leave, then you can appeal in writing to the Associate Director of Patient and Carer Experience who will respond within 1 month of your appeal, and the decision is final.

## Exceptions

There are some occasions when volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include but are not limited to acts that constitute gross misconduct, e.g. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer would be confirmed to the volunteer in writing. In some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before problem solving procedure can take place.

Helping people to be **the best they can be**

