



# Brighton and Hove Speak Out

## **Policy: Volunteering**

**Date agreed by Governance Board: November 2018**

**Review Date: November 2021**

### **Speak Out Volunteer Policy**

#### **Overview**

Brighton and Hove Speak Out recognises the importance of volunteers to its work. Volunteers are involved in the day to day running of all Speak Out's services. They are valued members of the team who contribute to the success of the projects & services by giving of their time, enthusiasm and abilities. Wherever possible, provision will be made to offer them opportunities to develop their skills while working at Speak Out.

#### **Purpose of the Volunteer Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and direction to all who work and volunteer within Speak Out and ensure that the experience of volunteers within the organisation is positive and beneficial to all. This policy sets out what Speak Out expects from volunteers and what their responsibilities are. The policy also sets out the procedures in place to make sure that each volunteer is recruited, trained and supported in a way that ensures that people with learning disabilities who use the project are well supported by volunteers and that volunteers themselves have a positive experience.

The policy is intended for internal management guidance only and does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personal agreement. There is a separate Code of Conduct for volunteers for this purpose. Speak Out reserves the right to change any aspect of the Volunteer Policy at any time and expects volunteers to adhere to the changed policy. Alterations to, or exceptions from, this policy may only be granted by Speak Out's Governance Board and must be obtained in advance and in writing. The Governance Board shall also decide matters in areas not specifically covered by this policy.

### **Scope of the Volunteer Policy**

Unless specifically stated this policy applies to all volunteers in all projects undertaken by, or on behalf of, Speak Out, and applies to all locations where Speak Out work is carried out.

### **Definition of a volunteer**

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses incurred in the course of his or her volunteer duties, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf Speak Out. A volunteer must have completed the application and induction process and be formally accepted by Speak Out prior to beginning volunteer work in a project or service.

### **Service Users as volunteers**

Speak Out supports service users with learning disabilities as volunteers within the organisation. Speak Out staff will ensure that supporting service users as volunteers does not conflict with or obstruct the provision of services to the service user or others.

### **Volunteer rights and responsibilities**

All volunteers who begin at Speak Out agree to work to a given role description for their role. They will be given appropriate induction and training for their project by the Volunteer Coordinator or the staff project lead. They will be given the right to effective supervision and support, and the right to recognition for work done. In return volunteers will agree actively to perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to work

within the values, aims, policies and procedures of Speak Out and work within Speak Out's Code of Practice for general volunteers or volunteer advocates.

### **Scope of volunteer involvement**

Volunteers are primarily recruited for specific roles on Speak Out projects but may be involved in other aspects Speak Out's work and may be invited to contribute to events such as Speak Out's AGM and annual strategic planning day, where volunteers can share their views about Speak Out's work and future plans.

Volunteers should not, however, be used to displace any paid employees from their position.

### **End of volunteering**

Speak Out accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at Speak Out's discretion. Volunteers agree that Speak Out may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to end the volunteer's role and relationship.

A volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to stop volunteering with Speak Out. This decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the Volunteer Coordinator or their project lead to ensure minimal impact to service users.

## **Volunteer Management Procedures**

### **Maintenance of records**

A system of records will be maintained confidentially in the Charity Log database for each volunteer, including dates of service, positions held, duties performed, training, support and supervision received. Supervision notes will be recorded. Copies of references and signed a signed 'Code of Practice' will be scanned and held with the volunteer record in Charity Log.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Anyone who has a conflict of interest with any activity or project at Speak Out, whether personal, philosophical or financial, must declare this so that Speak Out can decide a plan of action. A conflict of interest may be where a potential volunteer has a relationship with a service user that may compromise their ability to act independently as an advocate, for example if they are a family member, support staff or friend. Detail of the conflict of interest and any action taken to manage this are recorded on Speak Out's 'Conflict of Interest Record' form (see Conflict of Interest Policy for more information).

## **Representation of the Organisation**

While volunteering at Speak Out volunteers may be in a position of representing the organisation at external meetings or in public. They are expected to represent the organisation positively and within the boundaries of their role description. Prior to any action or statement, which might significantly affect or obligate Speak Out, volunteers should consult and/or seek approval from their project Lead. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, lobbying efforts with other groups or organisations, collaborations or joint initiatives, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

## **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for following Speak Out's Confidentiality Policy at all times and should maintain the confidentiality of information to which they are exposed whilst acting as a volunteer, whether this information involves a member of staff, volunteer, service user or another person, or involves the overall business of the organisation. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in the end of the volunteer's relationship with Speak Out or other corrective action.

## **Holding service user records**

If a volunteer is required to record or hold information about a service user (e.g. volunteer advocates), volunteers will follow Speak Out's Procedures for Record Keeping and work in accordance with Speak Out's Data Protection policy at all times.

## **Volunteer recruitment and selection**

### **Role Descriptions**

Volunteers, just as paid staff, require a clear, complete and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the role that they are expected to fulfil. Prior to any new volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each volunteer post. This will be given to each volunteer, at induction.

### **DBS Checks**

Brighton and Hove Speak Out carries out DBS checks for all Staff and Volunteers at least every three years. The level of check required will depend on the role of the Staff member or Volunteer.

All Speak Out staff and volunteers will be eligible for an Enhanced DBS check. This is because project staff and volunteers may be conducting home visits, working with service users on an on-going basis or 1-1. Other staff and volunteers also require an Enhanced check, including Trustees and admin staff and volunteers who may come into contact /work with service users at social events, fundraising activities etc.

### **Recruitment**

Volunteers will be recruited in line with Speak Out's Equality and Diversity Policy. The only qualification for volunteer recruitment will be the suitability to perform a task on behalf of the organisation. Volunteers under 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before applying.

Information about volunteer opportunities at Speak Out will be widely available in the community. Other formats will be available as appropriate to try and ensure that the team of volunteers at Speak Out reflect the diversity of the local community.

Applicants for a volunteer position will receive an application form and information about Speak Out's work and volunteer opportunities. On the return of the application form potential volunteer will be invited to an information session and informal interview where their skills and personal qualities will be assessed relative to the role.

## **Interviewing**

Prior to being appointed to a role, all volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for, and interest in, volunteering for Speak Out. The interview should discuss the relevant experience of the volunteer, their commitment to fulfil the requirements of the position, their values and understanding of disability issues etc. It should provide an opportunity for the volunteer to raise any questions they might have about the role and for these to be answered.

Interviews should be conducted by the Volunteer Coordinator or the relevant project lead and in some cases a service user may also be involved.

## **Outcome of the interview**

It will be explained to all applicants that where it is agreed that he/she is suitable for the position, 2 references will be taken up, satisfactory recommendations received and induction training completed before the position is formally offered. Anyone who is not accepted as a volunteer following interview can ask for feedback to explain the decision.

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

Not all offices at Speak Out are accessible to wheelchair users, however all rooms used by service users for advocacy activities are fully accessible, as are other venues used. Volunteers will be asked at interview if any reasonable adjustments are needed to allow them to fulfil their duties. Speak Out will meet these needs wherever possible.

## **Acceptance and appointment**

Following successful interview an induction date will be arranged and a start date within the relevant project or service.

## **Holiday**

Volunteers should inform their Project Lead as soon as possible with regards to any holiday being taken.

## **Length of Service**

Speak Out cannot guarantee the length of service. Problems with funding or other causes may result in a project coming to an end. Volunteers can move to other projects, where appropriate and further induction & training will be undertaken.

Speak Out does ask, where possible, for a minimum commitment of 6 months from general volunteers and 12 months for advocates.

## **Volunteer Training and Development**

### **General Induction**

All volunteers will receive an induction into their role, the project they will volunteer on and the Speak Out office. This will include familiarisation with the staff, premises, health & safety, equipment and procedures relevant to their role. The volunteer induction pack provides more detail and copies of policies etc. which they can keep. Relevant policies will also be available on the website.

### **Initial Induction & Training**

Volunteers will receive either 1-1 induction training or take part in a group induction session held by the Volunteer Coordinator or the project lead.

Induction training will broadly cover the history of Speak Out, all the current project and services and some specific training around the project or service the volunteer will be working in. Induction training will provide volunteers with the information and skills necessary to perform their role. The training and methods of delivery will vary according to the project but will be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

Key policies will also be covered during induction training including;

- Confidentiality

- Safeguarding Adults at risk
- Health and Safety
- Lone working Policy
- Code of practice for volunteers/ advocates

## **Code of Practice for Volunteers**

All volunteers must read either the Volunteer or Advocate Code of Practice before undertaking their volunteer activities. This must be signed and dated by both the volunteer and a Speak Out staff member.

## **Volunteer Development**

Just as with paid staff, Speak Out will support volunteers to improve their levels of skill during their time at Speak Out. Additional training and opportunities will be made available to volunteers during their service as appropriate. Ongoing training open to all volunteers may be provided by Speak Out or an external trainer, or external training may be provided by another organisation which offers relevant courses. There is an annual training budget available for all volunteers. Training should be relevant to the volunteering role and any training courses of interest should be discussed and approved by the relevant project lead.

There may also be opportunities during the induction period for shadowing paid staff or other volunteers in similar role (e.g. issues advocates), and observing projects or groups.

## **Volunteer Support**

### **Volunteer supervision**

Each volunteer who is accepted to a position with a project must have a clearly identified project lead (this may be the Volunteer Coordinator or another staff member) who is responsible for the direct management of that volunteer. The project lead shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the volunteer and shall be available to them for ongoing assistance.



1-1 supervision will take place regularly. The frequency and nature of this will vary depending on the project and volunteer role. This will be agreed between the project lead and volunteer and may involve formal face to face supervision (e.g. for some volunteer advocates) or informal support sessions (e.g. volunteers supporting drop-in sessions or advocacy groups). Supervision is an opportunity for both the volunteer and project lead to look at training opportunities, the accuracy of the role description and tasks undertaken and any areas which are going well or any areas in need of improvement.

### **Volunteers forum and team meetings**

Regular Volunteer forums and support meetings will be arranged. It is an expectation of attendance for certain volunteer roles (see Advocate and Volunteer Codes of Practice and role descriptions).

### **Volunteer management training for members of staff**

An induction into working with volunteers within Speak Out will be provided to new staff as relevant to their role.

### **Volunteer involvement in staff and project evaluations**

Reviewing of the effective use of volunteers may be a component in the evaluation of staff performance where the member of staff is working with volunteers. In such cases, supervisors should ask for the input and participation of those volunteers in evaluating staff performance. Volunteers may also be asked to comment on the project in which they are involved for review and evaluation purposes.

### **Lines of communication**

Volunteers are entitled to, and are expected to be willing to receive, all necessary information for the effective performance of their role. Volunteers should be kept up-to-date by their project lead with all relevant materials, emails, correspondence and information received from other organisations if appropriate. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives relevant information will rest with their project lead or the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers are expected to check for, and/or read information provided for them and respond to this as required.

## **Non-attendance**

Volunteers are expected to perform their role on a regular and punctual basis. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their project lead as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual non-attendance will result in a review of the volunteer's role with the Volunteer Coordinator or project lead.

## **Standards of performance**

Standards of performance will be measured against the volunteer's role description and/or Code of Conduct. Volunteers will have an opportunity to discuss their progress in supervision sessions and address any problems also.

## **Evaluation**

Volunteers will have the opportunity to review their work in supervision. An annual online volunteer evaluation will review the volunteer's experience overall at Speak Out and within the project or service they are volunteering for.

## **Corrective action**

In situations of need, corrective action may be taken following supervision. Examples of corrective action include the requirement for additional training, close monitoring of work or ending the volunteer position.

## **Dismissal of volunteering**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures laid out within their Code of Practice, or who fail to perform their volunteer work may be asked to finish volunteering at Speak Out. No volunteer will be asked to leave without the opportunity to discuss the reasons with their project lead or Volunteer Coordinator.

## **Reasons for dismissal**

Possible reasons for being asked to leave may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination; being under the influence of alcohol or drugs; theft of property; theft or misuse of Speak Out's equipment or materials; abuse or mistreatment of service users, staff or other volunteers; failure to abide by Speak Out's policies and procedures, including the volunteer/ advocate Code of Practice; failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

### **Concerns and grievances**

Decisions involving corrective action of a volunteer may be reviewed for appropriateness by a Speak Out manager. If corrective action is taken, the affected volunteer shall be informed of Speak Out's complaints procedure for expressing their concerns or grievance.

### **Notice of departure**

In the event that a volunteer departs from Speak Out whether voluntarily or involuntarily, it shall be the responsibility of the project lead to inform the affected staff and service users that the volunteer is no longer available. In cases of dismissal for good reason, this notification should be given to other staff in writing and should clearly indicate that any further contact with the volunteer must be outside the scope of any relationship with Speak Out.

### **Exit interview**

Exit interviews, where possible, should be conducted with the volunteer leaving their position, alternatively an exit evaluation questionnaire will be emailed to the volunteer. The interview should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position, hear suggestions that the volunteer may have for improving the position they have held and, more generally, suggestions for the improvement of the functioning of the wider organisation. The possibility of involving the volunteer in some other way at a future date might also be discussed.

### **Communication between supervisors and management**

Staff supervising a volunteer are responsible for maintaining regular communication, on the status of the volunteers they are supervising or on

any substantial change in the work of a volunteer, with their line manager, who should be consulted in advance before any corrective action is taken.

## **Volunteer Support and Recognition**

### **Reimbursement of expenses**

Volunteers are eligible for reimbursement of travel by public transport (taxi vouchers may be given for those unable to use public transport) or mileage for expenses incurred while undertaking work for Speak Out. The volunteer should submit a record of expenses monthly. A bank transfer, cheque or cash will be given in return. Prior approval must be sought from the Volunteer coordinator or project lead for any other expenditure which could be claimed (see Speak Out's Staff and Volunteer Expenses policy).

### **Insurance**

Public liability, professional indemnity and personal accident insurance is provided for all volunteers engaged in the work of Speak Out. This is currently to the value of £10 million indemnity.

### **Recognition**

All staff will recognise the valuable contribution that the volunteers make to the Speak Out's projects. Opportunities for recognition will take place throughout the year as appropriate.

### **References**

Speak Out will provide references for volunteers after a 6 month continual commitment to Speak Out project or service. It is assessed that this is an appropriate length of time to get to know a volunteer and their work style in order to effectively complete a reference.

### **Informal recognition**

All staff responsible for volunteer supervision are encouraged to undertake methods of recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis throughout

the year. These methods of informal recognition should range from a simple 'thank you' to a concerted effort to include volunteers as full participants in decision-making and feedback on the implementation of projects that involve the volunteer.

### **Other Relevant Policies**

- Code of Practice for Advocates and Volunteers
- Confidentiality Policy
- Safeguarding Adults and Young People at Risk
- Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy
- Staff and Volunteer Expenses Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy & Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Conflict of Interest Policy