

# External Volunteer Policy

## Policies and procedures

This policy sets out the framework for Unlock's volunteer programme. It explains our commitment to volunteers, potential roles available, recruitment and selection processes, orientation process when new volunteers start, support available during volunteering and support when moving on.

This policy is designed for everyone involved in Unlock; it sets out how volunteers are involved in the organisation. It will also help to ensure that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly during every stage of the process with the organisation.

## Introduction

### Our commitment to volunteers

- Unlock acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit users of its service, staff and volunteers themselves
- Unlock recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that a volunteers time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned
- Volunteers will be informed who is responsible for their support and supervision. They will have regular access to this person and will be given adequate support
- Volunteers will be given a clear idea of the tasks they are being asked to perform and of the responsibility that goes with those tasks
- Volunteers will be provided where possible with the appropriate equipment/tools/materials to enable them to carry out their tasks
- Where agreed, volunteers will receive all reasonable out of pocket expenses
- Volunteers will be adequately protected against risks involved in volunteering
- The relationship between paid workers and volunteers will be complementary and mutually beneficial. All colleagues will be fully aware of the area of work undertaken by volunteers and of the distinction between working and volunteering (see below).
- Unlock values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions which should be a fulfilling experience. We will provide support to encourage volunteers to develop in their role.

## Legal distinction of volunteers

Volunteers are people who are unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to the benefit of the community.

A volunteer does not have any form of contract of employment or contract to perform work or provide services. They are not workers and therefore not covered by the National Minimum Wage Act 1998.

Volunteers do not qualify for the national minimum wage (NMW) because they are not workers.

Volunteers can volunteer for anybody, not just organisations in the voluntary sector.

# Recruitment

## Roles available

There are a number of different roles where volunteers will be able to make a positive and worthwhile contribution to the charity. Our website has details of the roles and opportunities available.

## Marketing of roles

- New volunteer roles will be openly advertised and have a closing date (unless the role remains unfilled in which case they will remain open until they are filled)
- The website will have up to date details of current opportunities and how to be notified of future opportunities
- Each available volunteer role will have an appropriate role description/person specification uploaded to the website
- Between periods of recruitment, interested individuals are encouraged to sign up to our updates, so that they receive notifications of when positions become available.

## Raising awareness of roles

We will raise awareness of the roles available at Unlock through the following means:

- Unlock's own avenues:
  - ✓ Main website/Information site
  - ✓ E-circulation list
  - ✓ Online forum
  - ✓ Social media channels (Twitter, Facebook)
- Criminal justice news publications, including
  - ✓ Newsletters - Clinks '*Light Lunch*', Prison Reform Trust monthly newsletter, Criminal Justice Alliance fortnightly email, Monthly *Inside Time* prison newspaper
  - ✓ Step Forward Volunteering
- Local avenues
  - ✓ Prisons and Probation Offices
  - ✓ Job Centre and Work Programme providers
  - ✓ Local Volunteer Centres and other local agencies

## The application process

- All potential volunteers will be asked to complete a standard volunteer application form, giving details of the role they wish to put themselves forward for. Completed application forms should be submitted to [admin@unlock.org.uk](mailto:admin@unlock.org.uk)
- The application form doesn't request details of convictions. This comes at a later stage in the process, as Unlock has signed up to the 'Ban the Box' campaign. For more details on how we deal with convictions, see our *Disclosure of Convictions* policy available from our website.

## Interviews

- Those who may be suitable for a specific position will be invited to an interview at the Unlock office (or an alternative location, if more appropriate). Travel expenses will not be covered for this interview. However, where this would make it prohibitive to attending an interview, applicants should make this clear in their application and the reasons why, as in exceptional circumstances specific arrangements may be possible.
- Successful candidates will be informed and, office-based volunteers will be invited to come to the office for 2 'taster days' to familiarise themselves with our work and to see what they think of it, before being properly considered as a volunteer.
- At the end of the two days, Unlock's Volunteer Programme Lead (VPL) will meet with the individual, to see whether the role is what they expected, whether they think it will work for them, whether Unlock thinks it will work and whether any adjustments need to be made.

## Successful applicants

Successful applicants will be provided with a criminal records self-disclosure form which should be returned to the Volunteer Programme Lead. If any details are disclosed, consideration will be given to the individual's convictions and a decision made in accordance with Unlock's *'Applicants with a criminal record – Internal Process'*.

## Equal Opportunities (and people with convictions)

Unlock is committed to equal opportunities and has a published *Equal Opportunities Policy*, which in particular includes a section about people with criminal convictions. This is available from our website.

## Insurance

Unlock's insurance is sufficient to cover volunteers on the same basis as current employees.

# Starting to volunteer with Unlock

## Volunteer Handbook

We provide all new volunteers with a copy of the *Volunteer Handbook* before they start volunteering. This details some of the day-to-day operations of the charity to help volunteers settle in.

## Volunteer Agreement

New volunteers will be provided with a *Volunteer Agreement* before they start. This document summarises the agreed role, supervision, and any necessary training. It also sets out what the volunteer can expect from us and what is expected from the volunteer.

## Volunteer induction

The induction process for new volunteers will vary depending on their role, and the speed will depend on how often they're in, and the pace that they feel most comfortable with. However, the induction process will usually cover:

- Introduction to staff
- Initial paperwork – including completing a *Volunteer Emergency Contact Information Form*
- Using the office – computer, printer, photocopier, telephone etc.
- Introduction to job role and initial training, including discussing main activities and responsibilities,
- Shadowing an Unlock member of staff, or other volunteer, undertaking a similar role

At the end of the induction process, the Volunteer Programme Lead will meet with the volunteer who can flag up any concerns/issues and highlight any further training they feel they may need.

## Organisational policies

Shortly after a new volunteer has started, they will be provided with details of Unlock's policies and guided through them to ensure they are fully understood. These will include *Health and Safety, Data Protection, Equal Opportunities and Confidentiality*.

## Training and development

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for Unlock in order to equip volunteers with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the Volunteer Programme Lead (VPL) to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend all relevant training.

## First review

The Volunteer Programme Lead will meet with the new volunteer after 8 days/one month (whichever comes first). Short term and long term goals will be discussed, agreed and documented.

# While volunteering with Unlock

## Day-to-day tasks

Each day that a volunteer is in, they will sit down with their Line Manager to discuss their tasks for the day. At the end of each day, they will report back on how they have got on.

Volunteers will be asked to input their hours in Lamplight (Unlock's contact management database) every day that they're in.

## Supervision and support

The level of support given to volunteers will depend on what role/tasks they are performing at Unlock and their own personal circumstances. Support may involve:-

- Providing information
- Giving advice
- Providing access to training
- Offering group and one-to-one support sessions

All volunteers will be assigned a Line Manager who will be their first point of contact with any issues or queries regarding either Unlock or their specific role. In the event that their Line Manager isn't available, they will have a secondary contact to go to with any issues.

Supervision is part of the ongoing relationship between volunteer and Unlock and is an effective way of maintaining high standards of performance and of giving feedback. Regular sessions will be held where the volunteer and their Line Manager meet to:-

- Identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's performance
- Recognise achievements
- Set out future areas of work
- Identify individual training needs, including those relevant to their particular volunteering role and their wider personal development

A *Volunteer Review Form* is used for this purpose.

## Monitoring

Volunteers will be asked to report on their activities. Role specific monitoring documents will be provided for this purpose. This information will help us to recognise the contribution of volunteers across the charity and support accurate and effective reporting to funders and other partners.

## Expenses

In most cases, we will cover the travel expenses incurred by volunteers when travelling to the office is necessary as part of the volunteering role. This will be discussed with individual volunteers and an agreement will be made on a case-by-case basis. Where travel expenses are paid, these will be reimbursed once the relevant receipts are provided, and can be done on a daily/weekly/monthly basis (whichever is preferred by the individual).

Any other expenses will need to be discussed and agreed between the volunteer and their Line Manager in advance.

## Moving on

Our *Volunteer Exit Questionnaire* ensures that we obtain feedback from volunteers at the end of their period of volunteering. A *Volunteering Certificate* will be presented to volunteers when they leave the charity. This provides formal recognition of their involvement with Unlock and allows them to include evidence of their experience within their personal portfolio.