

## Volunteers Policy

Malvern Special Families is a voluntary organisation and volunteers are at the heart of its structure - as trustees, committee members and workers. The contribution of volunteers to the work of the Malvern Special Families is especially valued and respected. Malvern Special Families is committed to good practice when supporting its volunteers and maintains that the duty of care to the children and young people using our services is paramount.

### **Types of Volunteer**

Volunteers may be described as individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of an organisation, free of charge, with the primary aim of helping the charity to achieve its service objectives and or with the primary aim of bringing some benefit to the local community. In this sense, volunteers are to be distinguished from students, other work placements, where the primary aim is usually for the student to obtain certain work experience or to carry out work or research in certain areas.

The organisation recognises three different types of volunteers.

### **Occasional Volunteers**

These are people who volunteer at events and clubs such as a workshop or a party, or help with projects, for example by helping with the newsletter and mail outs. They volunteer occasionally, perhaps a few times a year.

### **Regular Volunteers**

These are people who take on a particular task, on an ongoing basis. Regular volunteers can include those undertaking administrative work, playwork and youth work.

### **Trustees and committee members**

These people hold positions of responsibility and have been elected by members of the organisation or selected on the basis of their skills and experience.

### **Recruitment**

Malvern Special Families will make ongoing efforts to recruit volunteers who match appropriate needs. This selection process will be based on the skills and interest of the volunteer and the current needs of the organisation.

Volunteers will be selected through the following process, before a proposed volunteer placement at Malvern Special Families is implemented:

- a role description,
- volunteer agreement,
- an application form is completed by the prospective volunteer.
- The prospective volunteer will be invited to a panel meeting with the intended line manager and second managerial personnel. Using the role outline and the specification the parties will engage in a two-way discussion of the proposed role, of its requirements and of each other's expectations, with a view to assessing mutual suitability. Following the meeting, the two Malvern Special Families' representatives will make a decision within one week regarding the individual's suitability for the particular role.
- Prior to commencing their placement, each successful volunteer shall be formally allocated to a particular employee who will manage and supervise the volunteer throughout the duration of her/his placement.

### **Volunteer agreement and work outline**

MSF provides a volunteers' agreement that does not place any obligation on the volunteer to carry out their volunteering activities. If you volunteer with MSF, you are given a volunteer agreement. This is part of a set of documents, which includes the volunteer policy and voluntary work outlines in the volunteer job description. It outlines our hopes and expectations rather than any specific requirements placed upon the volunteer.

The volunteer agreement:

- Volunteers are not paid or provided with anything of value for their services.
- The arrangement isn't legally binding and isn't intended to be an employment relationship either now or in the future.

- This agreement reflects the hopes and intentions of the volunteer and the charity, and is not contractually binding in any way on either party.'
- That MSF hopes that volunteers have a long, pleasant stay with our organisation.
- Minimum age- Our insurance underwriter's recommendation for the minimum age for volunteers is 18 years of age.
- Training for your work may also be provided if directly relevant to your voluntary work
- Volunteers are asked to comply with your rules and regulations that apply to them
- There are no obligations on the part of the volunteer regarding the amount of time they have to commit to MSF.

The agreement is by no means a contract; it is simply a guideline to help the volunteer feel supported and clearer about their responsibilities.

### **Responsibility**

As a charity we are aware that staff and volunteers 'caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children' as part of their normal duties are in 'regulated positions' under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. Volunteers are never left unsupervised with children and never have sole care. Volunteers do not provide personal care to children or young people.

If a volunteer repeatedly fails to show up MSF may decide not to offer them further duties, to terminate the volunteering arrangement if there is one, or offer them alternative duties that can be undertaken on an "as and when" basis.

### **Expenses**

MSF does not provide money, or any other benefits with a tangible value, for volunteer time. By benefits we mean anything that is not directly linked to a volunteer's ability to carry out their duties. For instance, training that is not relevant to their volunteering role, such as first-aid training for a volunteer who has no first-aid responsibilities, or making free or subsidised childcare available to them at times when they are not volunteering. However, small tokens of appreciation such as badges or certificates may be given. Benefits like training directly associated with volunteer duties are discretionary and not guaranteed.

MSF can pay volunteer expenses as long as it is actually out-of-pocket expenses, preferably supported by receipts, or a reasonable pre-estimate of expenses that will actually be incurred. MSF offers to pay a volunteer up to £5 for travel expenses that were actually incurred travelling to the venue for agreed volunteering. However, this level of expenses would not be reasonable if you had shared a lift with another member of staff who is paid or who has claimed themselves for the mileage.

### **Benefits**

Volunteering shouldn't affect someone's ability to claim benefits although it will be essential that a volunteer only receives actual out-of-pocket expenses, and not a reasonable pre-estimate, unless the volunteer pays back any surplus money after the expense has actually been incurred. The volunteer will need to tell JobCentre Plus that they are volunteering, and provide details of the expenses for which they are being reimbursed. This is the responsibility of the individual, and not the organisation for which they are volunteering.

### **Equal Opportunities**

Volunteers will not be in a formal legal relationship with MSF and so will not be employees within the wider meaning of discrimination legislation. If someone's performance as a volunteer is a factor in the decision about whether we offer them a job, protection from discrimination on grounds of sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age applies during the volunteering work. In such a case, MSF should take particular note of its obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

### **MSF's legal responsibilities towards our volunteers**

Aside from the duty not to discriminate, our duties are mainly to do with health and safety – making sure that the workplace is safe, and that activities do not pose an unacceptable level of risk. MSF also keeps in mind our duties as a data controller and only process personal data about a volunteer lawfully. This includes only processing sensitive personal data about them with their express consent.

### **DBS checks (formerly DBS checks)**

Dependant on the nature of the volunteer's role, MSF will carry out checks if the volunteer is in a position where they are working with children or vulnerable adults on a regular basis.

### **Liability and insurance**

Adequate and appropriate insurance cover is obtained to cover the financial risk of accidents to or caused by volunteers. The cover provided by insurance companies differs from case to case and it is therefore crucial to check with your insurance company the extent to which volunteers are covered under the terms of public liability, employer's liability, motor vehicle and professional indemnity policies. MSF ensures our insurers are aware that we

have volunteers working for us and are covered both for any claims that may be brought if a volunteer should become injured and for any claims that could be brought against you because of the actions of a volunteer (for instance, if a volunteer adviser gave negligent advice). Our insurance underwriter's recommendation for the minimum age for volunteers is 18 years of age.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All volunteers are required to make a commitment to equal opportunities. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of the charity's equal opportunities policy and will be supported in its practice.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers will be asked to follow our confidentiality policy and follow its principles.

Volunteers will have access to personal information about some individuals. Some volunteers will also hold information about, for example, family and personnel matters.

The organisation needs to be able to trust its volunteers with such information, which is confidential. The charity will not usually take occasional volunteers wishing to carry out office administrative duties due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the records involved.

### **Resolving concerns**

The charity aims to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage.