



Bipolar UK Volunteering Policy

Bipolar UK Volunteering policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Bipolar UK. It is of relevance to all within the charity, including volunteers, trustees and staff.

The policy is endorsed by the Board of trustees. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate to the needs of Bipolar UK and our volunteers.

Commitment

Bipolar UK acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit our service users, staff team, local communities and our volunteers themselves.

Bipolar UK values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate roles and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and support individuals' development.

Bipolar UK recognises its responsibility to coordinate its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of volunteer's time is best used to the advantage of all concerned.

Definition

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship as well as an important component of democracy. Volunteers are people who are, unpaid and contribute their time, energy and skills of their own free will to benefit the charity and those we serve.

Statement of values and principles

Volunteering is an important activity that is supported and encouraged by Bipolar UK and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements, but does not replace, the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between staff members and volunteers.

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise the charity cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what Bipolar UK expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of us.

Recruitment & Selection

Bipolar UK is committed to equal opportunities and believes volunteering should be open to all regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible as possible.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the charity or referred to the nearest Volunteer Centre.

All volunteers will be asked to produce two references, to satisfactorily complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check and will be invited to attend an informal interview.

Volunteers will have a clear role description.

New volunteers will receive an induction to the work of the charity.

Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence.

Training & Development

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to the charity's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health & safety, safeguarding vulnerable groups and equal opportunities.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for Bipolar UK in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the team manager to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend relevant training.

Support, Supervision and Recognition

Volunteers will have a named team or named staff member within a team to whom they can seek support, guidance and discuss issues around volunteering.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and Bipolar UK to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be agreed between the volunteer and Bipolar UK.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views.

Expenses

Bipolar UK recognises that the reimbursement of expenses incurred in traveling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

Bipolar UK's volunteers are able to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure and a completed expenses form. What can be reclaimed from the charity and the calculation of expenses will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses.

The charity has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses, which are the same for volunteers and staff. Unless specifically agreed, all expenses are reimbursed through BACs payment directly to your nominated bank account. If you do not have a bank account, please speak with your team member directly.

Insurance

Bipolar UK's liability insurance policies include the authorised activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

Bipolar UK does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

Confidentiality

Bipolar UK will train and advise the volunteer on its confidentiality policy and procedures, where relevant. This includes those relating to personal information held by the organisation relating to the volunteer.

Settling Differences

Bipolar UK aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The charity seeks to ensure volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the charity's guidelines for settling differences.

If you have any concerns please speak with your nominated team member/team in the first instance as together we will endeavor to resolve the problem as soon as possible. If an informal resolution proves impossible, Bipolar UK's Complaints Policy will be referred to. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role, or to leave the charity.

Rights and Responsibilities

Bipolar UK recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- have adequate support in their volunteering
- receive appreciation
- volunteer in a safe environment
- be insured
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- receive appropriate training
- be free from discrimination
- be offered the opportunity for personal development

Bipolar UK expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- attend training and make the most of support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the charity
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- respect the work of the charity and not bring it into disrepute
- comply with the charity's policies