



## **Volunteer Involvement Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

The SUN Network is the local champion for people using mental health, and substance misuse services. We work to ensure that local people's voices are heard and influencing important decisions about local NHS, social care and public health services. At The SUN Network we welcome volunteers to help us undertake our work and we will aim to involve a diverse range of volunteers from across the county, who are reflective of the local community.

The SUN Network will follow good practice volunteer management principles, taking guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and working closely with the volunteer support organisations in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

### **2. Aims of the Volunteering Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the principles and working practices for volunteer involvement in The SUN Network and ensure that best practice is followed.
- Provide a reference document which will cover all aspects of The SUN Network's relationship with volunteers for everyone who is concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers and their expectations and promoting voluntary activities.
- Ensure that volunteer involvement in The SUN Network is understood and accepted by paid staff, volunteers and Board members and there is clarity about why we involve volunteers.

### **3. What is volunteering?**

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy freely given for the benefit of the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken by choice, without concern for financial gain.

### **4. Why The SUN Network involves volunteers.**

Volunteers bring a variety of skills and a fresh perspective. They can offer time and passion to a particular project, adding value to our work and supporting our sustainability.

Volunteers have knowledge of their local communities; by involving volunteers, The SUN Network are able to build stronger links with the local community.

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Volunteers act as ambassadors, promoting The SUN Network's activities and services. This is a unique role, different to that of paid workers, who they do not replace.

The SUN Network expect that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.

## 5. Who can volunteer?

The SUN Network has a responsibility to treat all volunteers equally and fairly.

The SUN Network will recruit, support and manage volunteers in line with our Equality & Diversity Policy, to ensure that individuals will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, race, sex, religion or cultural beliefs, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity.

The SUN Network recognises barriers to volunteering for individuals from different sections of the community; social, physical and psychological, and we will monitor our volunteer involvement practices continuously, to ensure that we are inclusive of all sections of the community.

- Disabled volunteers - The SUN Network will work positively with disabled volunteers and will ask all potential volunteers if they require any adjustments to support them in their volunteering role as part of the application process. The SUN Network will make reasonable adjustments to volunteering roles and available support, within currently available resources.
- Volunteers in receipt of benefits – The SUN Network will promote volunteering to individuals on means tested benefits and provide a copy of the Department of Work & Pensions guide “volunteering while getting benefits” to any volunteer or potential volunteer who informs us that they are in receipt of means tested benefits.
- The SUN Network is aware that there may be requirements for volunteers to be available for work; to be free to go to an interview with 48 hours' notice, and to be able to start work within one week of being given notice.
- Volunteers with minor or spent convictions. The SUN Network recognises that many individuals have criminal records with spent or minor convictions and are reluctant to apply for voluntary work where this would involve disclosure of their record. The SUN Network welcomes applicants from individuals who may have minor or spent convictions and will promote this as part of the volunteer application process.
- Volunteers from overseas - The SUN Network welcomes volunteers from overseas who have the legal right to undertake voluntary work as part of their immigration status in the UK.

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- The SUN Network recommends that individuals check their right to volunteer with the UK Border Agency, in order not to jeopardise their immigration status.

The SUN Network recognises that not all individuals will have the skills & experience required, nor be eligible for every volunteering role. In these instances, and where we have no other suitable opportunities available, we will signpost individuals to their local volunteer support organisation for additional support.

## **6. What can people get from volunteering with us?**

The SUN Network recognises that volunteering is a two way process; with volunteers giving their time to help and in return gaining some benefits for themselves. Volunteering with The SUN Network can provide new challenges and help people learn new skills.

Volunteering with The SUN Network can be a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities.

The SUN Network will support volunteers on this journey by providing references to those who have completed a volunteering project or volunteered for 20 hours or more.

Volunteering can provide an opportunity to meet new people and be involved with something personally rewarding.

## **7. Planning for Volunteer involvement**

The SUN Network recognises the importance of planning volunteer involvement as an integral part of the development of operational activities; acknowledging the requisite investment of staff time and other resources needed.

The SUN Network will seek to develop a range of imaginative volunteering opportunities, both short and long term, and will regularly review these to ensure that it is involving a diverse range of volunteers from across the county, who are reflective of the local community.

The SUN Network will develop a role description for each volunteering opportunity using a standardised format, see Appendix 1.

The SUN Network will ensure that volunteers are insured for any planned volunteering activities and will risk assess each role, to plan what training, support and recruitment methodology is required.

The SUN Network will budget to ensure that volunteers receive training, support and out of pocket expenses in line with section 10 of this policy.

## **8. Recruitment and selection**

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Volunteers may be members of The SUN Network, but the role is not restricted to members. The SUN Network will use an open and fair recruitment process for each volunteering role, which will be outlined to potential volunteers in advance.

The SUN Network will promote volunteering opportunities through a variety of advertising methods, to ensure that the opportunity is promoted to a wide range of potential volunteers.

The SUN Network will only ask for the information needed to ensure that someone is suitable for the role they have applied for. All information given by volunteer applicants will be treated confidentially in line with the Confidentiality Policy.

The SUN Network will make reasonable adjustments where possible, to meet the access needs of potential volunteers.

Volunteers will be selected and screened for suitability through one or more of the following methods, dependent on the role:

- Completed application form for all volunteer roles.
- Informal or formal interview, depending on the requirements of the volunteer role.
  - References - all volunteers are required to give the names of 2 people who can be approached for personal references. Acceptable referees should have known the potential volunteer for at least 1 year and cannot include family members.
  - If the role involves regulated activities in relation to Vulnerable Adults or Children, The SUN Network will ensure that the volunteer has a Disclosure and Barring Service check, in line with our Safeguarding Adults and Children's Safeguarding Policies.

If an applicant is not suited to the volunteering role The SUN Network will explain the reasons to the applicant and direct them to other volunteering opportunities. The SUN Network will make decisions regarding suitability in line with this Policy and organisation's values and strategic direction.

## **9. Induction, training and ongoing support**

The SUN Network will provide an induction and appropriate ongoing training for volunteers, relative to their volunteering role, so that they are prepared for the tasks allocated to them, e.g. safeguarding, equality and diversity training, confidentiality, health and safety, etc.

All volunteers will have a named individual as their main point of contact and will be provided with appropriate support; this could be through one to ones with a staff member or peer support, as appropriate to the role. This will provide volunteers with the opportunity to feedback on the progress of their volunteering role,



discuss any personal development needs appropriate to their volunteering or talk about any problems. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity of an annual development review meeting.

The SUN Network will seek to involve volunteers as partners in project development decision making processes, for example through project meetings.

The SUN Network will ensure that volunteers will receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to The SUN Network in the form of thanks for volunteering activities undertaken; this may include volunteer certificates, low value items or 'thank you' activities.

## **10. Personal Safety**

All volunteers are expected to follow safe practice guidelines, as described in the volunteer handbook and lone working policy.

Volunteers will not be asked to attend meetings at the home of a member of staff or another volunteer, nor will members of staff attend meetings at a volunteer's home

Staff will carry out risk assessments as necessary for events that volunteers will be supporting.

## **11. Volunteer Expenses**

As part of its commitment to ensuring equity of access to volunteering opportunities, The SUN Network is committed to paying pre-agreed out of pocket expenses to volunteers, that are incurred solely in undertaking the volunteering role.

Volunteer expense claims will only be paid for actual expenses incurred as evidenced by receipts, using a standard claim form. Expenses will be reimbursed to volunteers as soon as possible, not in excess of 15 days by direct payment to the bank account held on record.

The SUN Network will ask volunteers to choose the most cost effective method of travelling to and from / or parking at any volunteering activities, taking advantage of concessionary travel rates where applicable.

The SUN Network will ask volunteers who use their own motor vehicle for travel relating to their volunteering if they are taxed, insured, have an MOT (if appropriate) and that they have informed their insurance company of their volunteer driving, before any expense claims are paid.

The SUN Network reserves the right to check that this documentation is in place before payment of expense claims is made. The SUN Network can provide a template letter to volunteers for their insurance companies if required.

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Mileage rates for volunteers will be paid at a rate approved by the Board and not in excess of HM Revenue & Customs guidelines, to ensure that volunteers do not receive taxable profit from their volunteering activities. These rates will be reviewed annually in March, to ensure that they do not exceed HM Revenue & Customs approved rates.

- Motor vehicle: volunteers can claim 45p per mile on the first 10,000 miles in the tax year (1st April – 31st March) and 25p per mile for any mileage over that amount. Please collect VAT receipts for petrol to support mileage claims.
- Motor cycles: volunteers can claim 24p per mile. • Cycles: volunteers can claim 20p per mile.
- Car parking: The SUN Network will refund parking costs for any volunteering activities; receipts must be attached to the submitted claim form.
- Public transport: The SUN Network will refund the cost of bus tickets for volunteering activities.
- Volunteers may claim the cost of standard rail travel only and journeys should be booked in advance if possible, so the cheapest standard ticket is available.
- Receipts for journeys on public transport must be attached to the submitted claim form.

Refreshments: if volunteers are attending a function of between 3 and 4 hours, a refreshments allowance of up to £2 is claimable, if no refreshments are provided at the event. For more than 4 hours, a lunch allowance of up to £6 is claimable. For more than 8 hours, a further meal allowance of £6 can be claimed.

Caring costs: if it is essential for a volunteer to incur additional carer costs in order to volunteer, then an evidenced claim can be submitted on the following conditions: care is for a child or children under 16 years of age; or where there is a proven medical or social need. A claim is not payable if care is provided by a member of the volunteer's household; or where "no cost" care is provided by another individual, body or organisation. Care costs must be discussed and agreed in advance.

Pre-approved incidental expenses may be reclaimed where solely relevant to the business of The SUN Network.

## 12. Dealing with problems

The SUN Network aims to make volunteering a positive experience for volunteers and the organisation, but recognises that sometimes, for all sorts of reasons, problems can occur.

The SUN Network will have a clear and fair problem solving process for volunteers to help resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity. This process is only for dealing

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with concerns around the volunteering relationship; for other concerns or complaints please refer to the Complaints Policy.

The SUN Network will make reasonable adjustments within the organisation's resources to ensure that volunteers can engage fully in the problem solving process.

Volunteers may bring a support person or advocate to any meeting that forms part of the problem solving process.

The SUN Network recognises that problems can occur on either side of the volunteering relationship.

Problems a volunteer could experience with what The SUN Network do could include:

- Feeling they are not being given adequate training and support to undertake their volunteering role
- Feeling they have been asked to do tasks that they don't want to do
- Feeling they are not being treated fairly by The SUN Network staff or other volunteers. (This list is not exhaustive)

Problems The SUN Network could experience with a volunteer could include:

- Not doing the tasks The SUN Network has asked them to do, or taking on tasks outside their agreed volunteer role
- Not following The SUN Network's policies and guidelines
- Behaving in a way that falls outside the volunteers' code of conduct
- Being unreliable and not telling us why
- Misuse or theft of The SUN Network's resources. (This list is not exhaustive)

#### Dealing with Volunteers' concerns

Informal: The SUN Network will work with volunteers to resolve any concerns that the volunteer has informally through ongoing support as detailed in section 9 above. The SUN Network will encourage volunteers to resolve any issues through this informal process in the first instance. If the volunteer's concern is not resolved to their satisfaction through this informal process, or their concern is with the person who provides their one to one support, they can notify the Executive Director via email, letter or a telephone conversation.

Formal: The Executive Director or their nominated representative should acknowledge the concern in writing (or in the volunteer's preferred method of communication) within 3 working days. The Executive Director or their nominated representative will offer the volunteer a meeting to listen to their concerns and attempt to resolve them within 15 working days of the meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; where possible this will be agreed with the volunteer. If the volunteer wishes, the

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concerns can be discussed via telephone, letter or email instead of a meeting, but this may extend the period of time for resolution of the issues beyond the 15 working days.

#### Appeal:

If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal stage, they may raise their concern with the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will acknowledge this appeal within 5 working days by the volunteer's preferred method of communication and offer an appeal meeting to listen to the volunteer's concerns and review the outcome of the decision, to ensure that the organisation's policies and procedures have been followed correctly. The Board of Directors will notify the volunteer of their response within 15 working days of this meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible. The Board's decision is final.

#### Dealing with The SUN Network's concerns

Informal: The SUN Network will work with volunteers to resolve any concerns informally through ongoing support as detailed in Section 9 above. The SUN Network will tell volunteers about any problems regarding their volunteering at the earliest opportunity. The SUN Network will agree with the volunteer how it can support them to move forward in their volunteering role. If appropriate volunteers will be offered additional training, extra learning time or agree a change in their volunteering role. If the above process does not resolve the problem, The SUN Network will offer the volunteer a formal meeting to discuss this. There are some occasions where The SUN Network will not be able to offer any support or the opportunity for volunteers to change their behaviour or practice; while not a complete list, this may include:

- Threats, abuse or attacks on any staff, volunteers or members of the public
- Breaking The SUN Network policies on safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults
- Criminal acts against The SUN Network, such as theft
- Any serious breach of the Volunteer Agreement

Formal: The Executive Director or their nominated representative will offer the volunteer a meeting to talk through the organisations concerns with the volunteer. They will explain what the issues are and outline their impact. The Executive Director will explore with the volunteer if there are any other opportunities to resolve the concerns and notify the volunteer of their decision within 15 working days.

If The SUN Network is unable to agree a resolution with the volunteer, the Executive Director may ask the volunteer to stop volunteering for the organisation. The SUN Network will signpost volunteers to the Volunteer Centres or other relevant organisations for other opportunities, if the organisation is unable to continue supporting an individual as a volunteer.

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### **13. When a volunteer's involvement with The SUN Network ends**

The SUN Network staff will ensure that the volunteer:

- Returns all property belonging to The SUN Network which may have been loaned to the volunteer to assist them in their volunteering role, to the office
- Returns all identity badges to the office
- Completes and submits any outstanding expenses claim within a month of stopping volunteering, if possible, sooner.

Signed:

Jonathan Wells  
Chair of Directors

Lois Sidney  
Executive Director

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019

Responsible Officer Executive Director of The SUN Network

To be reviewed August 2022

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## Appendix 1 – Pro-forma role description

(Example role description. This can be expanded to take up as much space as required) Role title:
Purpose of this volunteer role:
Main tasks:
Skills and experience needed:
Dates to and From:
Where will volunteering take place?



### **What support will we give you?**

We will provide you with an induction training, which will include the following: • Introduction to The SUN Network • Health & Safety • Adult & or Children's safeguarding • Equality and diversity training • Data protection training • Presentation skills • Listening & Reporting skills

We will offer support, which could include telephone or email support as well as regular meetings to check that your volunteering is going well. We will also offer regular development sessions.

### **What can you get out of this volunteering role?**

You will get the opportunity to meet new people • Find out about local care services • Help change care services for the better • Learn new skills that can help you improve your CV • We can provide you with a reference for further employment or training opportunities if you have completed a project or volunteered for at least 20 hours

How to apply: Please complete an application form, available from our website at [www.sunnetwork.org.uk](http://www.sunnetwork.org.uk) or from the office at:

The SUN Network, The Maple Centre, 6 Oak Drive, Huntingdon, PE29 7HN 07712 358 172 [enquiries@sunnetwork.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sunnetwork.org.uk)

For more information about this role speak to a member of our team.

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