

**actioninmind**

# Volunteer Handbook



# Contents

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>Hello and Welcome</b>                 | Page 3  |
| <b>About Action in Mind – what we do</b> | Page 4  |
| <b>Volunteering opportunities</b>        | Page 7  |
| <b>Supporting volunteers</b>             | Page 13 |
| <b>Social side of volunteering</b>       | Page 15 |
| <b>The essentials</b>                    | Page 16 |
| <b>Legal requirements</b>                | Page 20 |



# Hello and welcome

**Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Action in Mind and for supporting us to improve the lives of people affected by mental ill-health and to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.**

Volunteering is at the very heart of Action in Mind. We have a longstanding tradition of recruiting, training and supporting volunteers in different roles across the charity, from befriending and mentoring to community volunteering with the Hub Service, or supporting the Corporate Team with office administration. All our trustees are volunteers whose role is to ensure good governance of the charity. We also have people who volunteer to raise funds for us by running their own events or helping out with ours, or who donate funds through payroll giving and Gift Aid.

It is our ambition to ensure that everyone who gives their free time to us feels trusted and valued, that they have a positive volunteering experience and are proud to be part of Action in Mind.

As a volunteer of Action in Mind, you become part of the Collective Aim, our mental health supporter scheme which we plan to grow and develop to include individuals, such as yourself, people living with mental ill-health and also local groups and organisations, employers and businesses, schools and colleges. By working together we can create communities that are better informed and supportive of mental health which will lead to making a positive difference to people affected by mental health difficulties, their families and carers.

This handbook offers general guidance to our volunteering programmes and what you can expect from Action in Mind.

Supplementary information about specific volunteering opportunities, setting out job roles and tasks, is available with the handbook.

By checking out our website you will find more information about Action in Mind, along with our various publications, reports and the charity's strategy for 2016 - 2019.

We hope you enjoy your volunteering experience with us and we will do all that we can to help and support you in your role.



**Helena Scott, Executive Director  
Action in Mind**



Befriending



Internet Café Volunteer

## About Action in Mind

### What we do

We are a local mental health charity having been formed more than 30 years ago (prior to 2010, the charity was known as Stirling and District Association for Mental Health) to provide support for people experiencing mental health difficulties and those living with mental illness across the Stirling Council area and NHS Forth Valley. Our two new projects, Time and Space (peer mentoring for mental health carers) and Age in Mind (tackling mental health stigma and discrimination of people over 50) operate across Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils.

We see it our role to create positive attitudes towards mental ill-health by tackling stigma and discrimination which impacts on mental health improvement and recovery.

We work together with our supporters in the Collective Aim to ensure that mental health is central to national and local health agendas.

### Our Vision

A time when people experiencing mental health difficulties or living with mental illness feel themselves to be accepted and valued as contributors to society.

### Our Mission

We help people towards better mental health and well-being and to lead lives without fear of stigma and discrimination.

### Our Principles and Values

**Dignity and Respect:** Mental ill-health should not define the person nor should any person be subjected to social behaviours that distress, offend or discriminate.

**Enabling, Empowering and Supporting:** We all have a right to lead lives that have meaning, purpose and self-fulfilment and to have choice and control of matters that are important to us.

**Integrity, Credibility and Accountability:** We will uphold the trust and belief placed in us by all our stakeholders in our role as advocates for mental health.

**Unity in Action:** We are stronger when we work together with people who have a lived experience of mental ill-health, our local communities and partner organisations.



## Our services

Our core services range from Befriending (from the age of 12 years), Counselling, and the Hub Centre (Peer Support and Groups) to Rural Access and the Home Support Service.

Action in Mind's Home Support Service is registered with Stirling and Clackmannanshire's Shared Services commissioning framework, QuestForth, in line with the implementation of Self-directed Support in April 2014. All other core services are partnered with Stirling Council and NHS Forth Valley through the Stirling Integrated Mental Health Service which includes the Single Referral Pathway (SRP) for GP services.

**Information and Signposting:** we provide information to anyone who rings or emails us, whether this is about what we offer people by way of services or where to go to get support if we can't help directly. In such cases, it is essential that when we signpost people that our information is current and relevant to their enquiry.

We also receive calls from people experiencing distress who we try to help by talking with them and, in some situations, asking them to come to the office where we may be able to help them better, possibly referring them to their GP or contacting a family member, carer or friend. We also receive enquiries from people wanting to know about job vacancies or volunteering opportunities, student placements or internships.

**Partnership working:** we work together strategically with partner organisations where we have identified unmet service support or where we need to address issues arising from changes in social policy that may impact on mental health services and the people who use them, for example:

- > **Self-directed Support and Mental Health**, capacity-building for mental health organisations with the Mental Health Foundation and the Scottish Mental Health Co-operative
- > **Peer Mentor Support for Mental Health Carers**, with the Mental Health Foundation and Glasgow Association for Mental for Mental Health – to develop a new model of supporting mental health carers in Scotland
- > **Money, Benefits and Advice Service**, with Stirling Citizens Advice Bureau. A longstanding person-centred service for mental health service users to build financial capacity and reduce digital exclusion
- > **Time to Talk**, a rural high school-based counselling service with Stirling Council's Youth Services, and also a Stirling-wide service for 16 – 18 year olds supporting young people leaving school
- > **Riverside Pop-Up Internet Café**, a members' club for mental health service users run by Action in Mind's Hub Centre and led by peer support volunteers offering one-to-one tuition with basic computing and IT skills development groups
- > **Age in Mind**, a national project to raise awareness of stigma and discrimination of mental health in later life (people over 50).

## Governance

The charity is supported by the Board of Trustees, all of whom are volunteers.

We have advisors drawn from health and social care, psychiatry and business management to whom we can call on for guidance on matters relating to social policy, service development and business growth.

Service users are actively encouraged to participate in the Service User Reference Forum (SURF) which is a mechanism for gathering client perspectives on wide ranging areas relating to the charity's strategic direction and objectives, policy development, service design and delivery. SURF participate in the recruitment and selection of staff and trustees.

The Executive Director and Senior Management Team are responsible for the day-to-day management of our services and activities.

As volunteers underpin some services, namely befriending, peer mentoring and the Hub Centre, and to ensure a consistent approach to volunteering within our charity, we regularly review our volunteer management programme inviting feedback from all our volunteers at all times.

Action in Mind has a strict company position which states that volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff under any circumstances. All volunteer job roles are assessed against professional job roles to ensure there is clear separation and delegation of role, function and accountability.

Our core services are funded by Stirling Council's Social Services, whilst new initiatives and projects obtain funding from independent trusts and funders, fundraising and donations.







Office Volunteer



Befriending



Groups

# Volunteering

## Who are our volunteers?

Volunteering is an all year round activity! There are no upper age limits to who can volunteer as we believe that volunteers, across all ages, bring a huge wealth of personal interests, skills and experience – all of which can be channeled into volunteering activities that benefit our service users and support the work of the charity. Service volunteers must be 18 years and over, but we can consider younger people for supported volunteering activities such as the young person's social group (subject to parental or guardian agreement if under 16).

We strive to be an inclusive charity and encourage people with personal experience of mental ill-health to volunteer within our peer support programmes (based within the Hub Centre) where we focus on developing a client's personal strengths to help rebuild self-confidence and self-esteem.

Moreover, we recognise the huge benefits that can be derived from intergenerational volunteering, not just for service users but also for volunteers as 'generations together' can help bridge the gap of understanding how mental health, treatment and approach, stigma and discrimination continue to impact on the lives of people living with mental ill health.

### Recruitment

We hold two recruitment drives per year which are primarily focused on service volunteers but we also recruit volunteers on a needs basis throughout the year and respond to all enquiries about volunteering.

We have a long standing relationship with Stirling University as we have recruited volunteers, mainly psychology students for many years. Over the years, their contribution and commitment has been outstanding within the Befriending Services and Hub Centre, for example.

In this coming year, we hope to expand our volunteer recruitment to local high schools and the local college as our goal is to provide volunteers with an experience that helps them to fulfil personal aspirations such as furthering a career, whether this is in medicine, health and social care, health administration or research, particularly if we want to attract a future workforce for mental health.

Similarly, we want to encourage more men, particularly young men to volunteer as we see their role crucial to getting the message of mental health and well-being across to their peers. Men often will not seek early mental health support.

## Our Volunteer Charter

We see volunteering as a reciprocal relationship between Action in Mind and the people who volunteer, one that is built on mutual trust and respect. We believe it is important therefore to set out clearly what we expect from you and what you should expect from us.

### We require you to...

- commit to our charitable objectives and to abide by our principles and values in all activities
- perform your volunteering role and key responsibilities, as outlined in your role description, to the best of your ability
- participate in training, in line with your job role, and as identified through support and supervision sessions
- keep yourself regularly informed about our policies and procedures relating to service users supported by us, whether you work with individuals or in groups
- to act in the best interests of service users supported by us and work in a manner that is empowering and motivating and which enable service users to achieve their personal outcomes
- follow service reporting requirements, as set out in your volunteering role, and maintain regular contact with your volunteer supervisor, informing them if your contact details change or if personal circumstances affect your availability to volunteer
- maintain client confidentiality at all times, as well as all matters relating to the charity.

### What you should expect from us...

- induction about Action in Mind, including its vision, mission and values; in-service training and support on your chosen volunteering activity and any other training needs which may be identified in the course of you volunteering
- a delegated volunteer supervisor who will provide regular support and supervision, a three monthly review for new-starts and annual appraisals
- guidance on standards we expect from you, in line with our charity's policies and procedures
- reimbursement of all reasonable travel and out of pocket expenses
- insurance cover for approved volunteer activity
- fair hearing and resolution of any problems, grievances and difficulties and, in the event of an unresolved matter, offer an opportunity to discuss the issues in accordance with our Complaints Policy and Procedure
- the opportunity to feedback on your volunteering experience
- regular updates about the charity on our website and electronic bulletin, as well as any changes to volunteering policies or management
- Opportunities to change or extend your volunteering opportunities if wished.



**We will also try to ensure that you...**

- are kept informed of changes and developments that may affect you in your volunteering role and of any new volunteering opportunities
- have the opportunity to be involved in discussion groups and decision making across all areas of volunteers, but particularly from your area of experience
- are able to say no to inappropriate requests outside the volunteer role
- have access to a complaints procedure via an independent member of staff
- feel your contribution is valued by paid staff
- are able to see how your contribution fits into the broader charitable objectives of Action in Mind.

## Volunteering opportunities

### Service Volunteering

Service Volunteering applies to people who choose to work directly with service users in a support capacity, either on a one-to-one basis or in groups. It comprises of four main areas. Each has its own description of the volunteer role and key activities, responsibilities and accountabilities (see supplementary information sheets).

**Befrienders:** Action in Mind's befriending service is one of our core services and is part of Stirling's Integrated Mental Health Service. We offer befriending support to young people from the age of 12 years and for adults from the age of 18 years. Adults are required to have a mental health diagnosis and to be under the care of a psychiatrist. We generally ask volunteers wishing to train as befrienders to offer a minimum of two years as this enables a better relationship to develop between befriender and befriende.

*As a new volunteer, feeling supported has been invaluable. I know that I have the back-up to address any situations which may arise. The training helped me appreciate the range of issues service users face, and I felt ready to start befriending by the end* **Judith, Adult Befriender**

*I have found befriending very beneficial not only for the young person I support but also to myself. From them visibly gaining more confidence, I have found this extremely rewarding to see them become more happy and comfortable in different environments*

**Grace, Young Person Befriender**

**Community volunteers:** The Hub Centre, open Mondays to Fridays, extended to evenings and weekends for planned group activities, engages community volunteers to support service users to plan, develop and run interest and skills development groups and activities (arts and crafts, storyboard, walking, internet and computing and so on). Underpinning the ethos of the Hub Centre is our enabling and facilitating approach – adopted by staff and volunteers, to work co-productively with service users.

*Volunteering at Action in Mind has been rewarding and extremely informative. In particular, through meeting people in the Hub I have gained a new level of insight into a range of issues surrounding mental health. With both the Hub and the befriending service, I have had the chance to get involved in a variety of activities, meet many new people, and develop skills which will hopefully be of use to me in my future career*

**Alasdair, Community Volunteer, Hub Centre**

**Peer volunteering:** The Hub Centre provides opportunities for informal peer support between service users. This aspect is highly valued by service users who say that it helps to be able to share mental health experiences with others and to offer and receive mutual support.

The Hub Service also oversees the peer support volunteering programme which is available to service users across all of our services. We support service users to reconnect with interests and skills they fear they may have lost but would like to regain, or try new challenges by motivating others to get actively involved, either as peer support volunteers or as participants. Activities are planned and delivered, with support of staff and service volunteers, and usually programmed on a quarterly basis.

**Peer mentoring:** Our peer mentoring service for mental health carers, Time and Place provides peer support to carers. Worked in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation and the Glasgow Association for Mental Health, this service is unique in Scotland and is a three year pilot funded by the Big Lottery.

## Corporate Volunteering

**Board of Trustees:** All our trustees are volunteers who offer their time to support the strategic direction of the charity and that all matters conducted in the name of the charity are carried out with the highest level of good governance.

**Office volunteers:** Office volunteers are part of the corporate team as they support the charity in its administration functions, including the switchboard, planning and supporting external events such as our AGM, information stalls at information stalls etc.

**Fundraising volunteers:** We welcome people who wish to fundraise or donate to our charity. All funds raised will go towards supporting the work of the charity whether this is to develop new services or projects, or to help towards capital purchases such as IT equipment, refurbishment of the building and furnishings.

## What volunteers often ask...

### How much time do I need to give?

There are no time limits to how long anyone can volunteer but we usually seek a minimum commitment of six months for office volunteering or community volunteering in the Hub Service and a minimum two-year commitment for befriending or peer mentoring within our adult and young people services.

On average, volunteers usually give between two to four hours per week but this may depend on the volunteering activity. For example, befriending or mentoring volunteers offer a minimum of 2 hours per week, plus travel time, whereas office volunteers may be able to offer half or full days on a regular or intermittent basis. In some instances, volunteers are engaged in more than one regular volunteer activity at a time, while others support one-off fundraising or information awareness raising activities.

We actively encourage volunteers to explore new opportunities as they arise within the charity as training and support is given.

### What happens if I need to stop volunteering?

We understand that from time to time volunteers may need to take time out from volunteering or bring their volunteer placement to a premature end due to unforeseen circumstances.

As part of volunteer induction we ask service volunteers, in particular, to give us as much notice as they can so that we can put in alternative or new measures to ensure service continuity. For example, if volunteering within the befriending or peer mentoring service we may need time to find a suitable volunteer replacement to continue support to the client without interrupting the support too much.

It may be that a volunteer is finding the volunteer placement challenging and that even with additional support from the volunteer supervisor it is judged that this may not be the most appropriate placement for them. Some volunteers may decide to end their volunteering altogether while others may wish to be considered for alternative opportunities, either within the same service or elsewhere. Whatever the circumstances all volunteers ending their placements are offered an exit interview.

Should there be a complaint from or about a volunteer this will be conducted in line with our complaints policy and procedure. We do however reserve the right to end a volunteer's placement, as a last resort, if we feel that the task or their performance is not benefiting service users or the charity, or there has been an irresolvable complaint.

## Can I ask for a reference?

Action in Mind is pleased to offer volunteers references provided they have completed six continuous months of satisfactory volunteering work with us. All references will be provided by a senior manager and will contain only the factual information about the dates of volunteering, a brief overview of the role/s undertaken and training completed. We will include any volunteer awards that you may have been nominated for or received. A copy of any references will be retained in your volunteer notes by your volunteer supervisor.

## What volunteers say about their experiences with us...

*The experience of working with Action in Mind has been educational in a way that books and journals can't be.*

**Maureen, adult befriender and psychology student**

*Volunteering in the Hub Centre gave me a unique opportunity to meet people with lived mental health experience when previously my knowledge was all theoretical. Thank you for all your support and training.*

**Isaac, community volunteer, Hub Centre and psychology student**

*Being a part of the SURF is positive for many reasons. Meeting other service users is wonderful as well as knowing that the different views and inputs from individuals are all valued by the charity.*

**Kathryne, service user and SURF participant**

*It is now 10 years since I first started volunteering with Action in Mind. Since then I have developed many skills, one being able to listen and appreciate other people's problems. I am an office volunteer and part of the role involves speaking with service users by telephone, chatting at the Hub and so on. I have developed an empathy with people. I keep thinking I should retire but I know I would miss the comradeship of Action in Mind.*

**Kathlene, office volunteer and retired**



# Supporting volunteers

## Induction and Training

All volunteers must complete the Action in Mind basic volunteer training course as this is part of the recruitment and selection process. This normally consists of three-hour workshop sessions held over a five week period, usually in the evenings.

Once completed, volunteers are provided induction to their volunteering role by the relevant volunteer supervisor and participate in regular in-service training, support and supervision.

For Peer Mentors, there is a short mentoring training course run by the Time & Space Project and Mental Health Foundation.

## Additional Training

We strongly encourage volunteers to register for the Scottish Mental Health First Aid courses when they come around as they provide an invaluable baseline for recognising early distress signals and how to support a person.

We also are now able to access online training to Scottish equivalent accreditation with West College Scotland through Workwise Personnel Ltd. There are a range of courses appropriate to our work and we begin this new partnership with staff and volunteers registering for the SVQ Level 3 course, Understanding Autism. For the time being these courses are free but may incur a charge once they are established in Scotland.

We also let volunteers know when courses become available through Stirling Council's training and development department, such as child and adult protection.

Stress Control courses are available to the public by Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils which are delivered in a lecture format. Conducted over six weeks, participants receive a free DVD and stress control booklet. Mindfulness is another good way of learning how to manage stress and develop ways of managing this confidently.



## Reviews

It is important that volunteers feel comfortable in their volunteering role and that the experience meets with their expectations, while also meeting client needs and outcomes.

### First service review

All new volunteers are required to undergo a first service review within three months of becoming a volunteer with Action in Mind. This is an opportunity for them to discuss how the role is going and any concerns they may have, to decide what changes may need to be introduced and to consider whether you wish to continue in this role or consider some other volunteer opportunity within Action in Mind, or elsewhere.

### Annual Review

Reviews are held annually and after the first 12 full months of service have been completed. The annual review is an opportunity for volunteers to reflect on their volunteering activity, their personal strengths and what they feel they need to improve on, any training they feel they may need, and also if they wish to consider additional or new volunteering opportunities. The exception to this is that befriending or mentoring volunteers are usually required to provide a minimum of two years' commitment to working with the same client, unless circumstances change which may necessitate a change of client or if the service is closed.

Volunteer reviews are confidential and will not be shared with third parties without your knowledge and permission.

## Support and supervision

This includes regular 6 -8 weekly support and supervision sessions with your volunteer supervisor. Notes will be taken at each session which must be jointly agreed between yourself and your volunteer supervisor. You will receive your own copy and one copy will be retained by us.

Volunteers are actively encouraged to participate in these sessions as they are designed around a process of personal development which helps volunteers to develop their interpersonal skills as well as gain experience, particularly when working directly with service users in befriending or mentoring services, as well as the Hub Service.

Action in Mind aims to treat all volunteers with fairness and respect. If you should ever encounter a personally distressing or difficult situation involving a client, staff member or other volunteer/s please discuss this with your volunteer supervisor, in the first instance. If this is not possible, you should contact the Executive Director as soon as possible.



## Social side of volunteering

We encourage volunteers to participate in all our social activities and networking events as this is an excellent way to meet staff and volunteers and feel part of the charity.

We also plan volunteer-only social activities and networking opportunities so that you can learn about what other volunteers do, share and exchange experiences with each other, and generally feel part of the wider volunteer community.

### Volunteer awards

We hold a volunteer awards ceremony each year as part of our Annual General Meeting where we acknowledge the work of all our volunteers but also the contributions of individuals who may have reached a milestone of volunteering or may now be leaving us, or who have been nominated for a special award by staff and service users.

One such example is our Service User Reference Forum (SURF) which achieved a volunteer accolade in 2013 for its contribution to the employer's guide, Working Well, mental health in the workplace and for participating in the partnership project with the Scottish Parliament's Community Partnership's Project (2012/13).

We welcome people who offer to fundraise for us who do this as personal challenges that often include involve tests of single-mindedness and physical endurance. Whether cycling from John O'Groat's to Land's End, 'A six-pack for six grand' keep fit challenge, running marathons or bag packing, our fundraising volunteers bring not only new ideas of how to raise essential funds but also generate interest in mental health from people who may not have given this matter much thought before.

# The essentials

## Accidents and incidents

We have clear policies and procedures for reporting accidents and incidents for staff and volunteers, whether these occur in our premises or elsewhere when working with service users, this includes threatening or aggressive behaviours. These will have been covered during your induction and training programme.

Volunteers must report any accidents or incidents they have had or any client or service users to their volunteer supervisor immediately ensuring that no-one is left in any vulnerable or unsafe position or place. If the volunteer supervisor is not available contact should be made with the Executive Director.

Volunteers will be required to complete accident and incident reports. In the event that follow up is required this will be undertaken by the Executive Director and the Services Manager and you will be informed of the outcomes.

## Emergency situations

In situations where this relates to one or more service users and depending on the situation, if anyone has been physically injured, or becomes suddenly unwell, it may be necessary to call for an ambulance or their GP for medical advice. Some situations may necessitate calling the police.

Again, dealing with emergency situations is covered in our volunteer training course and induction programme which sets out our health and safety at work policy and procedure. Befrienders are provided with emergency contact numbers of who to call in the event of an emergency. However, nothing can quite prepare you for an emergency when it occurs. It is important however that you stay calm and focused and follow health and safety procedures set out in our policy should you be working outside of our premises.

## Expenses

All volunteers are given written guidance when they first start on what expenses they can claim and how to submit their claims. This guidance is also reviewed from time to time.

We cover travel costs, based on the shortest journey from your home, place of work or study to the place where you volunteer. In some exceptions, we will cover any out of pocket expenses provided these have been agreed beforehand by your volunteer supervisor and are aligned to your volunteering activity.

All volunteers' expense claims must be completed, signed and submitted with receipts to their volunteer supervisor by the 1st of each month. If using your own vehicle you should record your mileage using postcodes as a guide.

We cannot accept retrospective claims or those not supported by receipts. Payment is usually made directly into your nominated bank account by BACS, by the 21st of each month. Mileage is paid at 30p per mile.

## Expenses and welfare benefits

If you are in receipt of welfare benefits you can still volunteer and receive out-of-pocket expenses without affecting your claim, providing that you comply with the relevant regulations.

- If you are a volunteer and the only payment you receive or expect to receive is solely a payment to cover your expenses.
- If you are paid anything else, even if it is below the current 'earnings disregards' all of your hours of work count. If your average hours are 16 or more a week, you'll be excluded from income support. If the Department of Work and Pensions decision maker is not 'satisfied that it is reasonable for (you) to provide your service free of charge' they may treat you as having notional earnings.

You must inform the Department of Work and Pensions and/or Jobcentre Plus that you are volunteering before you take part in any activity, especially if you are receiving any Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA), receiving a national insurance contribution by virtue of being a Carer or claim or receive a Carers allowance.

If you receive JSA you will need to fulfil the following requirements to ensure your benefits are not affected. The specific requirements on being available for work, fit for work and actively seeking work, form the jobseekers agreement which you sign with your job coach at Jobcentre Plus when you claim:

- to be actively seeking employment, and have enough time to enable you to do this
- to be able to be contacted promptly if a job opportunity arises
- to be willing and able to attend an interview or take up employment within certain time constraints. This timescale may change due to likely legislation changes so please ask for guidance if unsure.

If you require more detailed advice on your circumstances please contact Stirling CAB – on [bureau@stirlingcab.casonline.org.uk](mailto:bureau@stirlingcab.casonline.org.uk) or call 01786 470239.

## Health and wellbeing

There are many reasons why you may have volunteered and volunteering can itself impact positively on your general health and wellbeing. For instance, by making new friends and helping others, many volunteers feel an improvement in their own self-esteem.

We do however require to know from you if you have any health conditions that may affect your volunteering, such as asthma or other allergies, epilepsy or any mental health conditions. You are required to complete the Health at Work statement and inform us of any conditions and any prescribed drugs you are required to take. All information is treated in the strictest confidence.

## Holidays and sickness

It is important that you tell us in good time of any planned holidays or if due to sickness you are not able to fulfil your volunteer activity. This is particularly important when supporting service users on a one-to-one basis or where you might be facilitating a group or social activity.

## Insurance

Action in Mind does not provide motor insurance cover for volunteers. If you claim reimbursement of mileage (30p per mile) you will be obliged to have Business Use on your insurance as this is declared to the HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs). Mileage costs will not be reimbursed without valid evidence of business cover.

When supporting service users within the befriending service or when participating in group activities, it is essential that you have read and understood the relevant company policies to minimise any personal risk, service users or others when you are using your own vehicle.

*Volunteers failing to comply will have their volunteering contract terminated.*

We provide Employers Liability, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity cover for all volunteers while volunteering with us. To qualify volunteers must be aged 16 and over.

## Photographs and multi-media

From time to time Action in Mind will ask service users participating in one or other activities if they agree to having their photograph taken for use in one of our publications, such as the charity's annual report or to depict services or projects for publicity materials. Similarly we may wish to include quotes from service users or to involve them in multi-media events for campaigning. In all such cases service users will be approached by a staff member of Action in Mind and asked to sign a permission slip granting us permission to us.

It is important that volunteers do not photograph or record service users (audio or video) themselves as this may constitute a breach of trust and lead to disciplinary action.

## Smoking policy

Smoke free laws have been introduced across the UK to protect employees and the public from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. All premises and vehicles used by Action in Mind must be smoke free and volunteers are not permitted to smoke when working with service users. Service users should be requested not to smoke when they are with you, even if you are in a public place.

## Offers of gifts

A personal gift should only be accepted on a 'one-off basis' and must not exceed £5.00 in value. Frequent offers of such gifts must not be accepted. If the giver insists on giving any gift, he/she should be advised that you are unable to accept such gifts personally and that the gift would have to be given for the benefit of the charity. If a giver offers a gift of cash this must be given to the Administrator with full contact details of the giver.

Any gifts offered to the charity will be acknowledged with a letter of thanks from the Executive Director. In all cases, volunteers must inform their volunteer supervisor who will make a note of this in their file notes.



## Personal appearance and what to wear

If you are in contact with service users or members of the public (or both), then it is very important that you convey a professional manner in your personal appearance and dress appropriately at all times. This is important to service users you may be supporting and also because you are a representative of this charity.

## Personal boundaries

Observing professional and personal boundaries are central principles of social care management for all staff and volunteers. For example, staff and volunteers should not give personal contact details nor should they buy or receive gifts or accept offers of cash from service users, except where these may be permitted by Action in Mind policy.

How we relate to service users is essential for building trust and confidence in our support services and in their relationships with staff and volunteers. It is important then that our communication with service users is clear and open, that we avoid speaking in a way that may be ambiguous or which can be misconstrued or misunderstood and lead to a breach of that client trust and confidence.

Boundaries can change over time, often for very positive reasons, and volunteer activities will need to re-appraise boundaries within the relationships it establishes.

## Personal safety and ID cards

Lone-working volunteers are issued with a personal alarm for their safety and must have a mobile number with which they can be contacted and on which they can call out in the event of an emergency.

All volunteers must provide a current passport size photo of themselves for their personal ID card which must be signed by both the Executive Director and themselves. This must be carried at all times when volunteering.

## Planning activities and events

Where volunteers are involved in planning activities or events on behalf of the charity, or for a particular service, they must be planned in line with the charity's events management guidelines and in conjunction with the volunteer supervisor and/or administrator.

## Reliability and commitment

It is important that you are punctual and ready to start your volunteer role at the agreed time. This is a matter of courtesy to service users, other volunteers and staff. If you are persistently late or fail to meet agreed commitments, your volunteer supervisor will meet with you to discuss any problems or difficulties in meeting existing commitments.

# Legal requirements

When volunteering with us you'll need to be aware of our company policies and procedures, particularly those below which affect not only you as a volunteer but also where you are working directly with service users. There are made available to you at your induction and volunteer training but can also be accessed through the common drive. Please take a few minutes to give them a good read through and do get in touch if you have any questions.

## Adult and child protection

Action in Mind has a duty of care to all our service users, staff and volunteers and to ensure that we meet all legal requirements pertaining to care management.

Our work entails working with vulnerable people, whether in their own homes, in our premises or other locations. If there are any concerns about any individual these should be reported to your volunteer supervisor immediately and they will decide what, if any, action is required, alternatively the executive director. If the situation is judged to be an emergency the Police must be called. Our adult and child protection policies are validated externally and meet required standards.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Adult Support and Protection Policy*
- > *Child Protection Policy*

## Confidentiality

You must not disclose any information you are given in confidence to any person by a service user outside of Action in Mind, and only then to your volunteer supervisor. Support and supervision provides you with the opportunity to discuss any matters regarding your direct work with service users, but where you are unsure or have some concerns these must be reported directly to your volunteer supervisor or the Executive Director immediately. If you believe that a service user may be at risk you should follow our adult or young Person protection policies. Please also note that the principle of confidentiality remains after you have completed a task or are no longer a volunteer for Action in Mind and you should not disclose sensitive information obtained whilst a volunteer under any circumstance.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Confidentiality Policy*
- > *Adult Support and Protection Policy*
- > *Child Protection Policy*

## Criminal checks

All volunteers working in an individual or group capacity with our service users in services such as befriending, mentoring or the Hub Service are required to be members of the PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme. Should prospective volunteers not already be members we can support their application.

Individuals engaged as office volunteers or accepted as trustees require an Enhanced Disclosure. All applications for disclosure certificates are free to volunteers. It should be noted however, that there can sometimes be delays in receiving notifications of PVG Scheme and Enhanced Disclosure applications which may in turn delay the start of volunteer placements, particularly befriending, mentoring and community support.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar someone from volunteering with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of their offence.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Disclosure*
- > *Recruitment of Ex-offenders*

## Data Protection

Volunteers must comply with the Data Protection Act and our Data Protection Policy and Procedures where any task you are involved in requires access to the personal details of service users, staff, members, other volunteers or any other person that you may deal with on behalf of us.

You must not keep records on personal systems, manual or otherwise, that we do not have access to, without permission. If you are involved in a task that requires you to deal directly with sensitive information we will ask you to sign a declaration confirming that you will abide with our policy on data protection and confidentiality.

We require to hold your details on record – this can be both in paper and digital formats, as follows:

- > your volunteer application form, references and Health at Work form will be held in a secure personnel file
- > you will be entered into the service volunteer database – this will be updated by volunteer supervisors on a regular basis but only designated members of staff will have access to it. The database provides important data on volunteer profiles that we use for our annual reports – annual accounts and charity report. All information is confidential.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Data Protection*

## Equality and Diversity

Action in Mind is committed to ensuring that services are accessible to people across all equality characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and that opportunities for employment or volunteering are made available without bias or discrimination.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Equality and Diversity*
- > *Dignity and Respect at Work*

## Health and Safety

Action in Mind is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for us, whether this is in our premises or when working with service users in their own homes or other locations. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as those carried out by our staff. It is therefore important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe working environment for all.

As a volunteer it is important that:

- > you carry out your tasks in such a way as to not risk your own health and safety or that of service users, staff and other volunteers
- > you follow our health and safety policy and procedures and, where appropriate, lone worker policies and procedures
- > report any health and safety concerns you may have in good time to your volunteer supervisor, or if you feel uncertain about anything.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Health and Safety at Work*
- > *Health and Safety*
- > *Lone Working and Out of Hours*

## Preventing and Responding to Challenging Client Behaviours

We need to ensure that all staff and volunteers working directly with service users, whether individually or in groups, feel that they are safe and well supported in their work and confident that they know how to and can respond appropriately should any difficult or challenging situations arise.

We recognise and accept that service users may become unwell, feel stressed and anxious at times and that this may sometimes present in ways that can be seen as challenging and possibly threatening. It is our duty to ensure that we have the right policies and procedures in place for staff and volunteers, whether they are lone workers and therefore working outside of the office, or working from our premises.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Health and Safety at Work*
- > *Lone Worker and Out of Hours*
- > *Managing Challenging Client Behaviours*
- > *Preventing and Responding to Challenging Client behaviours.*
- > *Statement of Values and Principles*

## Safeguarding

As a volunteer you may find that you have concerns about a client, or a client may confide in you that they have been or are being abused. If a client confides in you, reassure them, but keep questions to a minimum. You are not expected to investigate child or adult protection issues but rather to report, in line with our policies and procedures

It is important that you make a full and accurate record of your concerns, of what is said, heard and seen and pass this information on immediately to your volunteer supervisor or, in their absence, to the Executive Director.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Whistleblowing*

## Volunteer Management

Volunteering is a core activity of Action in Mind and as such we believe it is important that we have a volunteering strategy which sets out what we can offer people and that this reflects changes in the delivery of health and social care, but that we also understand the various reasons why people volunteer and what they may wish to gain from the experience for themselves.

Alongside the volunteer strategy, our volunteer management policy sets out in more formal terms how we will work with volunteers, from recruitment, training to deployment through to support and completion of their volunteering experience.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Volunteer Management Policy*
- > *Volunteer Strategy*

## If you need to make a complaint

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve and provide a better service for people affected by mental ill-health.

We have a complaints policy and procedure to ensure that we respond to all complaints, whether informal or formal, and that the complainant sees that we will respond quickly to any complaint. If you wish to make a complaint or you receive a complaint from someone about your service or anything to do with the work of Action in Mind, please pass this onto your volunteer supervisor. If unavailable this should be forwarded to the Executive Director as soon as possible.

### Relevant policy/policies:

- > *Complaints Policy and Procedure*

# Thank you

We can never say this enough!

We thank you for your time, energy, willingness and commitment to help make life better for people living with mental ill health.





# actioninmind

changing attitudes changing lives

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