



Volunteer Policy

Name	Reason for change	Date
Unknown	Original author	2002
David Larkin / Tessa Dugmore	Updated to reflect changes in organisational structure and volunteering good practice.	2012
Terri Calbraith	Three-yearly review, updated to reflect an expanded volunteering service and current good practice. This policy has also been put into the current Poplar HARCA policy format.	2015
Terri Calbraith	Review	2018

Approval process for current version

Presented to	Date	Outcome
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Poplar HARCA recognises that volunteers bring experience, knowledge, skills and energy which enrich and add quality to the services we deliver.
- 1.2. Volunteers enable us to expand our services, extend our community reach and help us to meet our organisational aims. As such, we welcome volunteers into our offices and community centres.
- 1.3. This revision of the Volunteer Policy along with renewed volunteer procedures aims to standardise the volunteering experience across Poplar HARCA.
- 1.4. This policy addresses volunteering at Poplar HARCA and not for Poplar HARCA staff who choose to volunteer externally.
- 1.5. This policy will work to ensure that all of our volunteers enjoy positive and meaningful participation; and will help Poplar HARCA to make the most of what volunteers have to offer.

2. What is a volunteer?

- 2.1. Poplar HARCA defines a volunteer as a person who freely chooses to spend unpaid time doing an organised activity that helps us to achieve our objectives and provides a benefit to the community.

3. Volunteering & Poplar HARCA

- 3.1. Volunteerism is actively encouraged throughout the organisation and is set to expand in the coming years to include the use of volunteers across all directorates.
- 3.2. All departments have a responsibility to support and promote volunteering.
- 3.3. Any member of staff managing volunteers will have regular contact with the Volunteering Coordinator and will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure of Poplar HARCA.

4. Terms of Volunteering

- 4.1. Volunteers are placed throughout the organisation in roles which complement, but never substitute the work of paid staff.
- 4.2. Volunteers have no contractual obligations with Poplar HARCA and either party may choose to end the voluntary placement at any time, with or without notice.
- 4.3. Volunteers will be asked to accept and sign a Volunteer Arrangement, and other policy agreements pertinent to their role.

- 4.4. A Volunteer Arrangement does not constitute a contract of employment and should not be confused for one.
- 4.5. Volunteer Arrangements act as a reference point for volunteer conduct and a reminder to Poplar HARCA that we should meet the standards of good practice we have set ourselves.

5. Equalities

- 5.1. Poplar HARCA is committed to its Customer Care Policy and to developing and maintaining an organisation where differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.
- 5.2. In recognition of some of the barriers to entering volunteering, volunteers are entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses between their home and place of volunteering. Reimbursement of other volunteering expenses may also be applicable.

6. Recruitment & Selection

- 6.1. Volunteers will only be recruited into roles with written role descriptions. Vetted by the Volunteering Coordinator all voluntary roles will be meaningful, varied and will present a volunteer with the opportunity for self-development. See Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Procedure.
- 6.2. Volunteers will only be recruited into roles with allocated supervisors who will provide regular support and supervision. See Volunteer Induction & Support Procedure and Volunteer Problem-Solving Procedure.
- 6.3. As part of Poplar HARCA's commitment to safeguarding we are committed to safer recruitment and doing everything possible to minimise the risk of someone unsuitable being recruited to work with children and young people or vulnerable adults.
- 6.4. In line with our Child Protection Policy, some roles will require an applicant to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check.
- 6.5. If, during the recruitment process, an applicant is deemed unsuitable to volunteer they will be given the opportunity to discuss the outcome and we will do our best to find potential alternatives for them.
- 6.6. In support of our mission statement, "to make Poplar a place where people choose to live, work and enjoy life" we encourage and welcome applications to volunteer from local residents.

7. Age Restrictions

- 7.1. Parental consent will be sought for all volunteers under the age of 18.
- 7.2. Young people will not be recruited into adult volunteering roles.

- 7.3. Voluntary roles for young people will be created specifically for them, will include a risk assessment and will take into consideration that they may lack experience, training, maturity and awareness all of which makes them more vulnerable in the workplace.
- 7.4. Poplar HARCA insurance providers will be consulted before new volunteering opportunities for children and young people are assumed.
- 7.5. Poplar HARCA encourages older people to volunteer in ways which are mutually agreeable.

8. Insurance/ Health & Safety

- 8.1. Volunteers are covered by both Public Liability Insurance and Poplar HARCA's Liability Insurance while they are on the premises and engaged in their agreed volunteering role.
- 8.2. Where necessary, task based risk assessments are carried out by supervisors for volunteer roles.
- 8.3. Where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may be necessary.

9. Settling Differences

- 9.1. Poplar HARCA aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. Seeking to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon as quickly and informally as possible in line with our Volunteer Complaints and Dismissal Procedure.

10. Information Technology & Data Protection

- 10.1. Poplar HARCA relies on its I.T. systems for both its administrative functions and its community projects. Some voluntary opportunities require volunteers to have access to data available in the network. For this reason, all volunteers must read, agree to and sign a confidentiality agreement and read the I.T Usage Policy.
- 10.2. Poplar HARCA is committed to protecting the personal information of volunteers and will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

11. Policy Review

- 11.1. Policies are reviewed every three years or sooner if they no longer reflect best practice.

12. Related Procedures

- 12.1. There are four procedures directly related to this Volunteer Policy, they are listed below and can be found on HARCA Net under 'Procedures'.
 - Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Procedure

- Volunteer Induction & Support Procedure
- Volunteer Expenses Procedure
- Volunteer Problem-Solving Procedure

13. Appendix 1: Impact Assessment

<p>How does the policy/procedure/strategy contribute to Poplar HARCA's aims?</p>	<p>Well considered volunteering opportunities help us to maximise our use of resources and provides volunteers with a network of support, increased opportunities, friends and community connections. The aim of this policy is to support people into meaningful voluntary roles, in doing so, it supports Poplar HARCA's Seizing the Opportunities aims.</p>
<p>Which group(s) of people benefit from the policy/procedure/strategy? If any group could be disadvantaged, what is the mitigation or justification?</p>	<p>It is made clear to all potential volunteers that Poplar HARCA has a selection process and acceptance is not automatic.</p> <p>Some roles require applicants to undergo an Enhanced DBS check. A caution or conviction may not prevent someone from volunteering but in our commitment to safer recruitment certain cautions or convictions may prevent an individual from volunteering with children, young people or vulnerable adults. We recognise that volunteering is a good path to employment, training, rehabilitation and any decision about an applicant's suitability will be made on a case by case basis.</p> <p>In some instances the nature of the voluntary role may exclude particular individuals. For example, gardening volunteers may require a certain degree of mobility, excluding some people with disabilities; or a role may call for a female volunteer tutor for a women's sewing group.</p> <p>To help tackle this we have a wide variety of voluntary roles with differing requirements. Where it is found that an applicant is not suitable for a particular voluntary role, we will do our best to find an alternative opportunity for the individual.</p>
<p>How have residents been involved in developing the policy/procedure/strategy? If they have not been involved, why not?</p>	<p>JEP considers policies and the views of that group are set out to the Poplar HARCA board which take decisions on it.</p>
<p>How will the policy/procedure/strategy be monitored and</p>	<p>An accurate record of volunteers, their hours, training, achievements and any moves into employment and training are all recorded and monitored.</p>

measured? (e.g. performance indicators?)	
If any, what are the Value for Money implications?	The financial value of volunteer contributions is calculated quarterly using the Accounting for Worth framework. The results are included in many reports including for the Services Board and the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
Will personal data be collected, stored, used or shared? If yes, a privacy impact assessment must be carried out.	