



A handbook for  
**Poplar HARCA volunteers**

**POPLAR HARCA**

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## Message from the Chief Executive

I'm proud to say that our volunteering programme at Poplar HARCA continues to go from strength to strength. The thousands of hours selflessly given each year enrich and enhance the services we offer to the local community; I know many would not be able to continue without your support.

We want you to know how much we value the time, energy and enthusiasm that you give us week in and week out. I'm constantly amazed at the breadth of roles performed, from youth support at Spotlight to helping our community events run smoothly, leading community workshops to assisting with research and even becoming Board members. Each and everyone of you deserves our thanks.

The purpose of this handbook is to set some practical guidelines for successful volunteering. Our aim is to ensure that all your efforts are utilised, recognised and directed to help us achieve our objectives. We also hope that this will help you gain as much as possible from your time volunteering with us; and that the skills, experiences and people you meet will be valuable resources throughout your lives. We are here to support your journey, so if you need more information about any of the topics covered in this handbook, your Poplar HARCA (PH) Contact will be happy to help.

Steve Stride CEO

## Who are we?

Poplar HARCA is an award winning Housing and Regeneration Community Association in East London.

We focus on providing homes and support to residents old and new; helping to create a place where people, communities and businesses can grow and thrive. With our partners, we are currently leading an extensive place-shaping programme for Poplar, attracting £2.5 billion investment to regenerate, build and create opportunities.

A photograph of three young girls of South Asian descent smiling and laughing. They have colorful face paint, including rainbows and floral designs. The girl in the foreground is wearing a denim jacket, the middle girl is in a pink top, and the girl on the right is in a light purple jacket. They are outdoors at what appears to be a community festival or fair, with colorful bunting in the background.

**Every year, hundreds of volunteers generously donate thousands of hours in more than 20 different roles enriching the services we offer to residents and the local community.**

## How we are organised

Poplar HARCA is split into the following five departments

**Housing** Everything from rents and lettings to housing management and home ownership.

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**Development** Providing more housing and urban regeneration in Poplar.

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**Technical** Property maintenance, looking after our homes and the local environment.

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**Finance** What it says on the tin! All the money stuff.

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**Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN)** Running a host of community centres offering everything from youth services and employment & training to playgroups and services for older people. The vast majority of our volunteering opportunities sit within CaN.

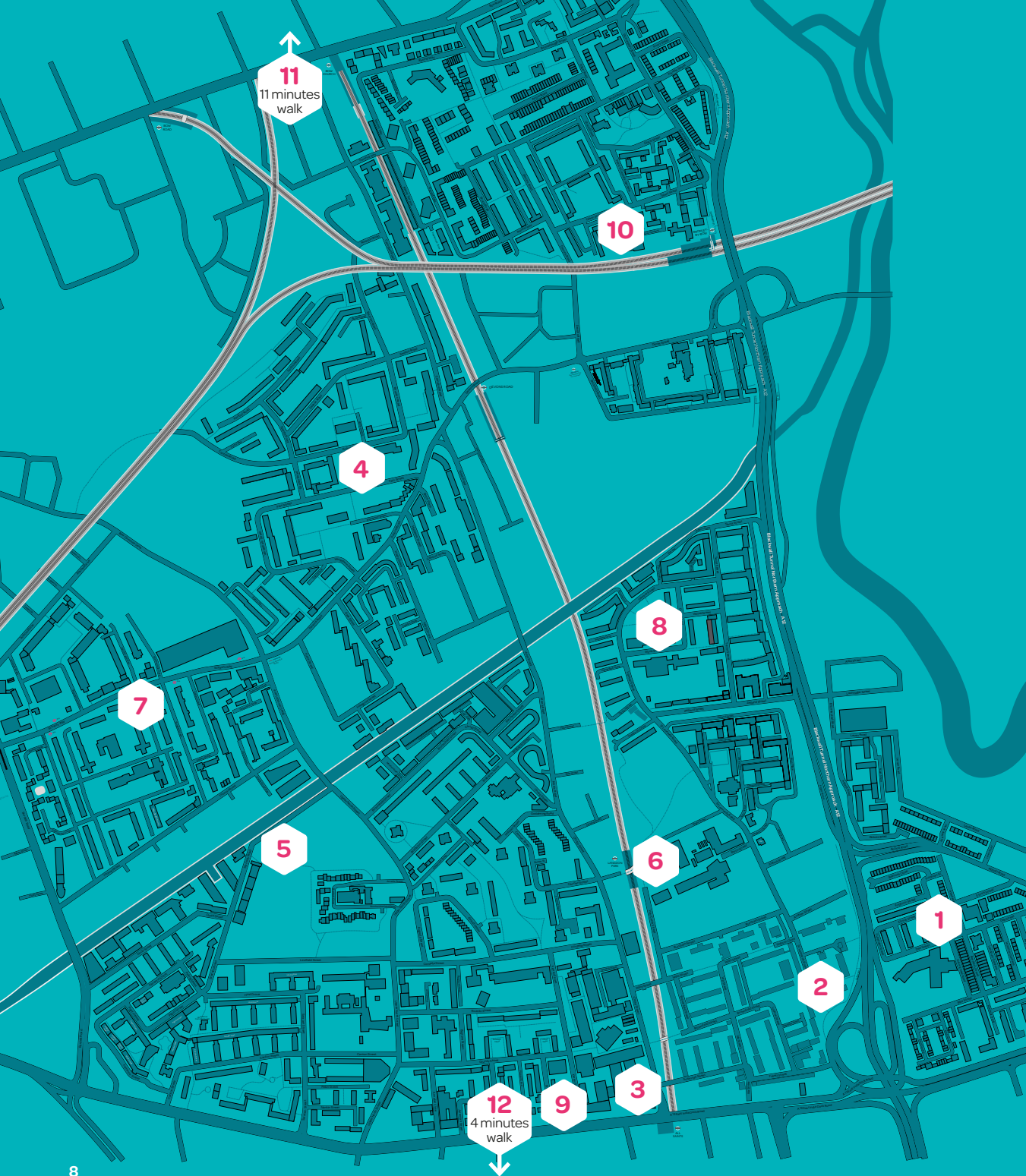
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**Volunteering has allowed me to grow and develop in ways that 3 years ago I didn't think possible. I now believe in my abilities and so do others around me.**

**TREASER**  
FRONT OF HOUSE VOLUNTEER  
TO STAFF MEMBER

# Our Community Centres



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b> <b>Aberfeldy Centre</b><br/>Aberfeldy Street,<br/>E14 ONU<br/>Tel: 020 7515 6794</p>                   | <p><b>7</b> <b>St Paul's Way Centre / Mile End Spotlight</b><br/>83 St Paul's Way,<br/>E3 4AJ<br/>Tel: 020 7510 5600</p>                  |
| <p><b>2</b> <b>The Cabin</b><br/>82 Leonards Road,<br/>E14 0QU<br/>Tel: 020 3069 7401</p>                          | <p><b>8</b> <b>Teviot Centre</b><br/>Wyvis Street,<br/>E14 6QD<br/>Tel: 020 7987 5764</p>   |
| <p><b>3</b> <b>Employment &amp; Training</b><br/>167a East India Dock Road, E14 0EA<br/>Tel: 0800 035 1991</p>     | <p><b>9</b> <b>Head Office</b><br/>155 East India Dock Road,<br/>E14 6DA</p>  |
| <p><b>4</b> <b>Linc Centre / Bromley South Spotlight</b><br/>70 Fern Street,<br/>E3 3PR<br/>Tel: 020 7538 5748</p> | <p><b>10</b> <b>Bromley North Spotlight</b><br/>Ian Mikardo,<br/>60 William Guy Gardens,<br/>Talwin St, E3 3LF<br/>Tel: 07957 346 273</p> |
| <p><b>5</b> <b>Poplar Union</b><br/>2 Cotal Street,<br/>E14 6TL<br/>Tel: 020 3039 3333</p>                         | <p><b>11</b> <b>Bow East Spotlight</b><br/>East Side, 6 Parnell Road,<br/>Bow, E3 2RB<br/>Tel: 07932 616 631</p>                          |
| <p><b>6</b> <b>Lansbury Spotlight</b><br/>30 Hay Currie Street,<br/>E14 6GN<br/>Tel: 020 30 111 333</p>            | <p><b>12</b> <b>Poplar Spotlight</b><br/>The Workhouse,<br/>Poplar High Street,<br/>E14 0AF<br/>Tel: 07947 605 473</p>                    |

# What YOU can expect from US

We want to ensure you enjoy your role and get the most out of the opportunity.

Our commitment to you. We will...

- Always treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation.
- Ensure you have a clear idea of your responsibilities, providing training and support to enable you to succeed.
- Provide a named PH Contact who will create opportunities for regular feedback so you can track your progress and work towards meeting your particular goals.
- Work with you to resolve any issues you come across quickly and supportively.
- Offer you fair, honest and timely feedback on your contributions.
- Prioritise you for further training we have on offer.
- Reimburse agreed out of pocket expenses.
- Provide an honest reference regardless of how long you are with us.

# What WE expect from YOU

To ensure you get the most out of your role, please try to do the following...

- Be reliable and punctual too! Many of our volunteering roles work directly with our residents and young people where these traits are valuable in building trusting relationships.
- Let us know if you can't make it in as soon as possible, including if you no longer wish to be involved in a project or if you're planning a holiday.
- If you don't fully understand your role and responsibilities, or encounter any problems, be sure to speak to your PH Contact for guidance.
- As a volunteer you might get to know some of our residents and we ask you to agree to respect their trust and keep their personal information confidential.
- Let us know if your circumstances change.
- Act in a professional way whenever you represent Poplar HARCA, Spotlight or Poplar Union. Act in a way that doesn't discriminate against or exclude anyone.

## How we will support you

**Induction** You will be introduced to your team and anyone else you might be volunteering alongside. We will also go over any health and safety requirements and paperwork. If you'll be volunteering with us over a longer period of time, we may recommend a settling in phase which gives us both a chance to assess how things are working out.

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**Training** It is important to us that you feel confident and happy to carry out your role. Most of our opportunities don't require formal training and you will be shown how to do tasks by a member of staff. Training opportunities do arise on a regular basis and these will be offered to volunteers as and when they crop up. Your PH Contact will keep you informed. For some training courses we are able to reimburse the costs of caring for your dependents whilst you are studying. Please just ask for details.

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**Support** Most volunteers will have review sessions with their PH Contact, the frequency of these will vary depending on your role but will, as a minimum, be every three months. Your review session will focus on how your role is going, highlighting your achievements and any support you might need, and help with any difficulties you may be facing or if your circumstances have changed.

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The volunteer celebration trip to the theatre in the West End was really important to me. The trip was the first time I have been out late without my family. I felt like an adult and that I'm growing up with this volunteering opportunity

**DIANA**  
YOUTH SUPPORT  
VOLUNTEER

## Employment & Training (E&T)


Our dedicated E&T team creates hundreds of employment and training opportunities every year.

If you are looking for work, our experienced employment advisors will work with you on a one-to-one basis and in groups to empower you to achieve your goals. Furthermore, many of the training courses on offer are designed in partnership with employers and linked to live job vacancies.

E&T support is tailored to individual need and the team will assist you with:

- Exploring various career options
- Creating a CV
- Job searching
- Finding work experience and volunteering opportunities
- Completing job applications and interview techniques
- Meet the employer sessions

If you expressed an interest in E&T support on your application form one of the team will be in touch with you soon. Otherwise call **0207 510 9770** to book an appointment with an advisor.



The opportunity is just perfect for me, I love working as part of a team and the people are really nice and supportive. Now people know me, they come up and chat to me which I really like.

**SHANAZ**  
CAFÉ VOLUNTEER

# Claiming Expenses

Volunteers are entitled to claim travel expenses for journeys between their home and their place of volunteering on days when they are scheduled to volunteer.

If you live nearby and have no mobility issues we request that you walk to your volunteering. You are always expected to take the cheapest travel option available.

People volunteering for five hours or more are also eligible for a meal on their volunteering day up to the value of £5.

Only previously agreed expenses will be reimbursed, speak to your PH Contact about any other expenses you might incur before making any purchases.

- **All claims should be made within 2 months from the date of purchase.**
- **It is your responsibility to claim your expenses so don't forget!**
- **Complete an Expenses Claim Form\* and attach the receipts to support your claim.**
- **Oyster card 'Top-Up' receipts will not be accepted, receipts must clearly display each expenditure.**
- **If you use an Oyster card we recommend you register your card online and print your 'travel history' as proof of travel.**

\*See the website: [www.poplarharca.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.poplarharca.co.uk/volunteer) to view the full expenses guide and to download claim forms – paper copies are available too, just ask!

If you have any doubts about what you can claim please ask us.

# Essential Information

## HEALTH & SAFETY

You will be taken through necessary health & safety information during your Induction. If you have any concerns or have a health condition that may impact your safety when undertaking your role it's important to speak to your PH Contact straight away.

## ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

Report them to any member of staff as soon as they happen, be sure to tell your PH Contact too. If it is a real emergency then contact the emergency services (999) as a priority.

## PERSONAL SAFETY

You should do everything you can to ensure you are safe while volunteering. You will be given health & safety information relevant to your role during your induction. If required you will be provided with an ID badge, a t-shirt or a 'volunteer' badge, to help identify you. On your application form you provided details of an emergency contact who we will contact in the unlikely event of an emergency.

## BOUNDARIES

Clear boundaries are important for staff, volunteers and service users. They enable us to carry out a service according to agreed expectations and ensures that everyone receives the same quality of service. We realise that staff and volunteers may sometimes have contact with residents and service users in a personal capacity – as friends, family or colleagues. In this situation, please take care to avoid any apparent conflict of interest. For some of our voluntary roles you will be asked to attend training around setting boundaries.

## KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP

HARCA Helpers is our monthly volunteer newsletter aimed at keeping our volunteers abreast of developments within the organisation. It also highlights training and employment opportunities, free events and each month we take a closer look at one of our volunteers in action! If you didn't sign up when you applied just mention it to your PH Contact who can add you to the mailing list.

# Essential Information

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Safeguarding vulnerable people is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers at Poplar HARCA. As a volunteer your duty is to report any concerns, no matter how small, to your PH Contact or another member of staff. If you are volunteering directly with young people and/or vulnerable adults you may be asked to familiarise yourself with our child protection and safeguarding protocols and to attend safeguarding training.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Volunteers must maintain confidentiality during their time with Poplar HARCA. During your induction, you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to help us ensure that personal information about our residents, staff, young people and other volunteers is kept private.

## **CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS**

Poplar HARCA works with and supports children, young people and vulnerable adults in a wide variety of ways and a DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service) may be required as part of your recruitment and selection. If your role requires a DBS check, it will be made clear right from the beginning and we will cover the costs of a check.

We are committed to involving ex-offenders as volunteers wherever possible. A criminal offence will not usually automatically disbar anyone from volunteering, and each applicant's case will be considered individually. However, it is likely that applicants with convictions for serious violent or sexual crimes will not be considered suitable for roles involving young people or vulnerable adults.

## **DATA PROTECTION**

It is important to us that the information we have about you is correct so be sure to update us if you have any change of circumstances. Information from your application will be stored electronically and shall not be kept for longer than is necessary. On your application form you agreed for us to share your details with our funders and monitoring organisation; we will never pass on your data to external marketing companies. You have the right to access any information we hold about you.

## **SMOKING**

If you smoke, please ask your PH Contact to show you where is suitable to smoke. If you are wearing Poplar HARCA branding, either a t-shirt or badge, please ensure this is covered up whilst smoking.

## **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

You are responsible for your personal possessions while volunteering, however we will help to find somewhere secure for your things. Please note that personal possessions are not covered by PH insurance so we encourage you to leave items of personal and financial value at home.

## **VOLUNTEERING & CLAIMING BENEFITS**

You can volunteer as often as you like, for as long as you like, so long as you meet the conditions of your benefit. If you're ever in doubt speak to your benefits advisor or a PH benefits advisor who can offer guidance. Your PH Contact can show you how to book an in house appointment and will be happy to provide a supporting letter upon request.

## **WHAT TO WEAR**

We want you to feel comfortable when volunteering - please use your judgement to dress appropriately for the activities you're asked to carry out. Some roles will require you to clearly wear a branded t-shirt and/or an identification badge, if so, you will be provided with these on your first day.

Please remember that as a volunteer for Poplar HARCA you are representing our organisation. You are responsible for presenting a positive image to visitors, clients and the community.

## Dealing with Difficulties

We hope you won't have any major problems in your role but if you do encounter a difficulty please speak to your Poplar HARCA Contact as soon as possible for advice and support.

If you are unhappy in your role please let us know, perhaps you need some more support, a bit of training or would like to try a different opportunity altogether.

In our experience, on the rare occasion we have encountered a problem it stemmed from misunderstanding and poor communication so don't delay in speaking to a member of staff. For serious problems you may wish to read the PH Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure for guidance.

If you don't feel comfortable discussing the situation with your PH Contact you can always talk directly to the Volunteering Coordinator first. You can find contact details at the end of this booklet.



**Volunteering with young people at Spotlight helps me see the world from their perspective. This makes it easier to have meaningful and productive interactions which add value to both theirs and my life.**

**BELVIN**  
FILM ACADEMY  
VOLUNTEER

## References

References will be provided by your PH Contact directly to a recruiter. You may use their details as a referee when applying for jobs, education or other volunteering opportunities. There is no minimum volunteering term to be eligible for a reference.

If you need a letter of support confirming your volunteering, whether for the Job Centre, an asylum application or for any other reason please speak to your PH Contact or the Volunteering Coordinator.

## Recognition

It's hugely important to us that you feel valued as a volunteer and that your efforts are put to good use. We try our best to acknowledge your contributions with volunteer trips, celebration events and by always remembering to say thank you.

Where suitable you will be invited to attend meetings and discussion groups, we value volunteer input in reviewing our services and making decisions and hope you will make the most of the opportunity to get involved.

## Checklist

It is important you are informed about all of the listed topics below, some information is covered in this handbook whilst others may be covered in your induction or on first day so don't worry if you don't know everything before you start. You will be...

- ✓ **Introduced to staff and other volunteers.**
- ✓ **Introduced to your PH Contact who will be your primary source of support.**
- ✓ **Given a tour of the building and access to any equipment you might need in the role.**
- ✓ **Told how to claim volunteer expenses.**
- ✓ **Shown where you can take a break and prepare refreshments.**
- ✓ **Informed of your duties and responsibilities in the role and told about any trial period.**
- ✓ **Told any important Health & Safety information, including what do in case of an emergency.**
- ✓ **Informed about Poplar HARCA, what we do, where and who for. Our mission, values and organisational structure.**
- ✓ **Required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement and a Volunteer Arrangement.**
- ✓ **Required to complete a Social Value Survey.**
- ✓ **Informed of our child protection and safeguarding protocols if you volunteer with young people or vulnerable adults.**
- ✓ **Required to read the IT Acceptable Usage Procedure if you use a computer in your role.**
- ✓ **Informed of who to contact if you have a support need or a problem in your role.**
- ✓ **Shown how to access Poplar HARCA's policies and procedures.**

# Contact Us

## Volunteering Coordinator

volunteer@poplarharca.co.uk

0207 536 8865

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## Youth Volunteering Coordinator

volunteer@wearespotlight.com

020 7536 8861

Shout about what you're doing! Add volunteering to your professional social media networks and be sure to pop it on your CV too!

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram



@PoplarHARCA



@PoplarHARCAOfficial



weare\_spotlight