

## **VOLUNTEER POLICY AND HANDBOOK**

### **VOLUNTEERING WITH CREATIVE LIVES**

#### Contents

#### **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

1. Introduction
2. Role and scope of volunteers

#### **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

3. Recruitment and selection
4. Starting a volunteering post
5. Management, support and supervision
6. Work environment
7. Personal
8. When things go wrong

#### **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

##### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Creative Lives values the contribution of volunteers within the organisation. We offer a range of opportunities according to the needs of the organisation and the particular skills and interests of potential volunteers. We recognise and encourage the unique qualities of individuals, their experience, skills, knowledge and the commitment they can offer.

We work to reflect the vast range of activities and interests involved in our work in the variety of volunteers we attract to support our work, whether from rural communities to inner cities and all points between.

We believe volunteering should be of mutual benefit to the organisation and the volunteer and we accept the role of volunteers and the time they offer with the understanding the volunteer involvement is at the sole discretion of the organisation.

Where possible, volunteering with Creative Lives is intended to offer development and progression for volunteers, meeting their interests and fulfilling the needs of the organisation.

We may have specific tasks and roles in mind, but we will also welcome creative suggestions and ideas bringing mutual benefits.

Creative Lives has an Equal Opportunities policy that commits Creative Lives to eliminating discrimination and widening access across all aspects of our work. This includes our volunteers.

#### **About Creative Lives**

##### **Our Purpose is:**

to celebrate, encourage and champion people expressing themselves

creatively in their everyday lives and practicing their creativity socially with other people.

**Our Strategic Priorities are:**

1. Building strong connections and relationships to support participation in creative cultural activity.
2. Demonstrating how taking part in creative cultural activity improves social connectedness.
3. Opening up more public spaces for creative cultural activity.

**Our Values inform all our activities:**

- We value creative groups whose activities are shaped and directed by the people who take part in them.
- We value situations where everyone is treated equally and feels included.
- We value the pooling of knowledge, skills, contacts, venues and equipment to enhance creative cultural activity, for the common good.

**Definition of Volunteer**

There is no legal definition of a volunteer, and the word can have different meanings depending upon the context in which it is used. For our purposes we will use the definition of volunteering as used in the Compact Code of Good Practice for Volunteering “... *any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups (other than or in addition to) close relatives.*”

**This policy is intended to apply to all Creative Lives volunteers but there are some exceptions to the policy in the particular case of Trustees of Creative Lives (i.e., members of the Board). These exceptions are clarified in the Creative Lives Governance Handbook, and, for Trustees, the Governance Handbook takes precedence.**

For volunteer Advisory Group members, the ‘supervisor’ referred to below is the relevant Advisory Group Chair and the ‘supervisor’s line manager’ is the Creative Lives Chair.

## **2. ROLE AND SCOPE OF VOLUNTEERS**

**Overview**

- Volunteers may be involved in all programmes of work, at all levels of skill and decision making.
- Each volunteer will be assigned a specific role, and this will be made clear in writing. The role may vary according to what opportunities exist at Creative Lives. Some roles may be part of a general opportunity whilst others may be unique to the volunteer or a specific task that they can fulfil. Roles will complement the activities of paid staff but do not replace or stand instead of a paid position.
- The role may evolve over time, and it may be appropriate to agree a new role description where an obvious departure from the original role is seen to be emerging. The role will be reviewed on a regular basis

according to the needs of Creative Lives and the volunteer. The frequency of any reviews will be agreed between the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor but will be held at least once every 12 months for long term volunteers.

- Volunteers are encouraged to use their initiative and develop their role within the organisation as opportunities and circumstances allow. Creative Lives will encourage independence and self-reliance, but volunteers must always consult with paid staff. This is especially important to avoid risk to volunteers and others and to ensure all activities remain within the protection of our insurance cover.
- Volunteers must always seek and obtain approval from Creative Lives where there is likely to be an impact on the organisation's budget or other resources in carrying out their role.
- Volunteering with Creative Lives will reflect the best available practice in working with volunteers. We will strive to ensure that volunteers are not exploited or treated unfairly or unreasonably. We acknowledge that Creative Lives has responsibilities to its volunteers and similarly has expectations of its volunteers.

### **What volunteers can expect of Creative Lives**

- to be given meaningful assignments.
- to be given clear roles which match the needs of the organisation with the skills, knowledge, experience, motivations and aspirations of the volunteer.
- to have effective and competent supervision, support, instruction and training
- full involvement and participation and a friendly and congenial atmosphere – making volunteering fun.
- recognition and celebration of work done loyalty and dedication.
- to be respected and to be listened to – two-way communication will be encouraged.
- fair resolution of complaints and problems.
- assurance of health, safety and welfare whilst undertaking volunteering activities.
- reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
- to receive written information and guidance where appropriate (e.g., on policies, procedures and any work in the organisation that may impact on the volunteer's role) offered in alternative formats to suit specific needs.
- for Creative Lives to have made financial and other provisions in management plans for the needs of volunteers.

### **Creative Lives' expectations of volunteers**

#### **Ambassador for Creative Lives**

Whilst volunteering for Creative Lives, volunteers represent the organisation and play a positive role in raising our profile. They should therefore have Creative Lives' best interests at heart and uphold the good name and reputation by behaving within any relevant Creative Lives policies and codes of conduct.

**Confidentiality**

Volunteers will need to exercise confidentiality and diplomacy on certain issues relating to the work of the organisation. In such circumstances volunteers must agree to adhere to a confidentiality agreement as defined by Creative Lives.

Situations where this applies will be made clear to volunteers in the induction process.

**Conflict of interest**

Whether paid or voluntary, it is essential that the individuals acting on behalf of Creative Lives are putting Creative Lives first. We wish to avoid anyone making a decision (or assisting in making a decision) on behalf of Creative Lives in any way other than completely impartially – in other words, where there is, or appears to be, a conflict between the interest of Creative Lives and other interests the individual may have. Creative Lives has a Conflict of Interest and Gifts Policy that is designed to protect both Creative Lives and the individuals involved. The Policy applies to Board members, Advisory Group members and staff members. All Creative Lives volunteers taking part in formal meetings within the organisation must comply with the Policy, a copy of which will be given to you by your supervisor when you start.

**Data Protection**

Volunteers who collect or administer any personal data on Creative Lives' clients, members or supporters will be required to comply with the Creative Lives Data Protection & Retention Policy (Appendix O) ensuring that all communications activity adheres to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Creative Lives will comply with rules on personal data about volunteers held on a computer or in paper files.

**Copyright**

Volunteers may be asked if they would donate to Creative Lives the copyright to any original works they may produce while in the course of volunteering.

**In addition, Creative Lives expects volunteers:**

- to co-operate with other volunteers and paid members of staff to achieve the aims of the organisation.
- to aim for high standards of efficiency, reliability and quality in all aspects of contribution.
- to encourage two-way communication with other volunteers and paid staff, fostering a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.
- to support and comply with the Creative Lives Equal Opportunities Policy and help promote the diversity of staff and supporters.
- to work within the law.
- to take reasonable care of their own health and safety whilst volunteering and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

### 3. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

#### **Equal Opportunities**

Creative Lives aims to recruit and select volunteers in accordance with the spirit of equal opportunity legislation and guidance. We will endeavor to ensure recruitment materials are distributed widely to all sections of the community and in formats appropriate to the differing needs of a diverse society. Creative Lives has an Equal Opportunities Policy which applies directly to Creative Lives volunteers.

#### **Screening and Police Checks**

- Checks for criminal convictions and detailed disclosures will only be made when needed according to the nature of the voluntary work being undertaken for the organisation in accordance with the Creative Lives Protection and Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy. A risk assessment will be made to assess whether such checks are necessary by legal requirement or to minimise any risk to vulnerable client groups.
- Creative Lives will seek expert guidance on this matter as it arises from the relevant authorities. Criminal convictions are not necessarily a bar to volunteering. As volunteering opportunities vary widely across the organisation, each one will be individually assessed for the need to undergo criminal records check and potential volunteers informed of the need for checks (if any) and reasons for it, during recruitment.

#### **Young Volunteers**

Anyone below the age of 16 must have written consent from their parent or legal guardian before starting to volunteer with Creative Lives. Volunteers below the age of 16 will be covered by Creative Lives' insurance policies whilst undertaking agreed activities in the same way as other volunteers.

#### **Volunteers with medical conditions**

To protect volunteers' wellbeing, supervisors may ask anyone undergoing treatment for a condition that relates to their ability to perform an allocated task, to present a 'certificate of capability' from their doctor or medical supervisor. (If there is a charge for obtaining this certificate Creative Lives will be prepared to reimburse it as an expense.) Where either task or a condition change, the supervisor may seek a new assessment of fitness in order to ensure that volunteers and those around them are not put at risk. Part of this assessment will include seeking out new volunteering roles so that changing abilities do not necessarily mean you cannot continue to volunteer with Creative Lives.

#### **Review**

We will regularly review our recruitment procedures and seek advice and support to ensure they are adapted to reach the widest possible audience.

### 4. STARTING AS A VOLUNTEER

**Induction**

- To ensure an understanding of the work of Creative Lives and their role within the organisation, each volunteer will receive a full induction with ongoing orientation and training where applicable. Induction will cover a range of issues including: the work of Creative Lives and the wider context; management, supervision, monitoring and evaluation procedures for volunteers; expectations and requirements in relation to Creative Lives policies including health and safety, equal opportunities, conflicts of interest; confidentiality; the specific role; what volunteers can expect of Creative Lives; expenses and practical arrangements; other relevant information.
- The induction will include a written checklist to be signed off by the volunteer and the supervisor as they go through the process to make sure that everything is covered.

**Introductory Period**

An introductory period will be agreed by the volunteer and Creative Lives during the induction. The length of this will depend upon the nature of the tasks undertaken by the volunteer for Creative Lives but will in most cases be three months. The volunteer and the organisation will then have the opportunity to look at what has been undertaken and whether it is of mutual benefit to continue. It will be a chance to revise or modify the tasks they have agreed, or for the opportunity to be withdrawn.

**5. MANAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION**

Creative Lives will ensure a clear line of management, and appropriate support and supervision for volunteers, in accordance with their needs and the role they have undertaken.

**Day to day support and supervision**

- Specific, day to day support and supervision will be offered by named individuals who are competent to do so and who will be properly supported. It may be their specific job to support the volunteer in their general work, or it may be that a particular task requires the expertise of a certain member of staff. These Supervisors will be responsible for maintaining regular communication with their line manager about the volunteers they supervise, and for the timely provision of all necessary paperwork to the line manager.
- Where roles, conditions, behaviour or circumstances change, or need to change, significantly to allow volunteering to continue, the supervisor will consult their line manager before taking action.

**Training and Development**

- Where possible, necessary and subject to funding, Creative Lives will strive to ensure staff members working with volunteers receive either internal or external training appropriate to the task and are kept up to date with information resources and advice about good practice regarding volunteers.
- Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while with Creative

Lives. Training will be offered to volunteers to fulfil their role with Creative Lives. Training needs will be addressed in support and supervision and will be agreed upon before volunteers apply for or undertake training. All training will be offered subject to resource levels.

- Additionally, if desired by the volunteer, Creative Lives will assist in maintaining records of volunteer involvement, experience and achievements that will assist with their future career opportunities (paid and unpaid).

### **Information and communication**

- We aim to give volunteers all information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Supervisors will ensure volunteers are added to relevant mailing lists etc. and provide them with access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings that are relevant to their work.
- We aim to ensure that lines of communication operate in all directions and should exist both formally and informally. Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions that may affect their duties substantially.

### **Evaluation, Review and Recognition**

Review sessions will be carried out and may be offered by the same member of staff responsible for day-to-day support or by another Creative Lives representative. Volunteers will be given feedback on their performance and targets will be agreed to help to improve performance and effectiveness. Notes will always be taken but may remain private to the supervisor and the volunteer.

**Recognition**

Creative Lives will acknowledge the contribution of volunteers in its reports, publications and webpages and will encourage supervisors to seek opportunities for further informal and formal recognition.

**Consultation and Review**

- Creative Lives will regularly review and update its policies, practice and procedures regarding volunteers. Regular internal and external consultation will take place. Volunteers will be asked for feedback, either as a group or individually, to ensure their views are considered.
- Where possible volunteer meetings will take place to address volunteer concerns and to offer mutual support and an overview of information.

**6. WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Volunteers are entitled to a comfortable and safe environment and the correct tools and equipment in which to fulfil their roles.

**Access to Property and Materials**

- Volunteers will be given appropriate access to the property of the organisation and those materials necessary to fulfil their tasks.
- Volunteers will receive training in the correct operation of equipment. Property and material shall only be used when directly required for the volunteer task. Volunteers must seek assistance from the organisation if they are unclear or unsure about any aspect of the operation of equipment.

**Health and Safety**

Creative Lives is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment to work in, and to providing appropriate instruction, training and supervision for the welfare of volunteers

- **Risk Management** - Creative Lives will undertake risk assessments of agreed activities for volunteers.
- **Insurance** - Volunteers will be covered by Creative Lives' insurance policies whilst undertaking agreed activities. Volunteers using their own vehicle to travel to meetings or other events on behalf of Creative Lives should ensure that they have appropriate motor insurance cover as this will not be covered by Creative Lives' insurance policies.
- **Health and Safety policy** - The written health and safety policy is available from any property that we occupy.
- **Conduct** - All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner and not put themselves or others at risk of injury.
- **Reporting** - Volunteers will report any accident/incident or dangerous circumstance or occurrence to a paid member of staff, irrespective of whether any person has been injured.
- **Information, guidance, training** - volunteers will be given guidance, and where necessary, training, on health and safety procedures.

## **7. PERSONAL**

### **Personal File**

Creative Lives will keep an administration file for each volunteer. The file may contain the following: contact details, supervision and training records, tasks undertaken, review records, and copies of signed documentation (e.g., Copyright or Confidentiality agreements).

The file will be stored securely and will only be accessible to named staff involved with the support of volunteers. Volunteers will have the right to view any information held in their file. When references are taken up for potential volunteers the referees will be advised that the references may be seen by the volunteers. Information will be kept confidentially and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

### **Expenses**

Out of pocket expenses, travel and subsistence costs arising from work taking place away from the relevant Creative Lives office will be reimbursed. Expenses are paid according to current Creative Lives guidelines. Receipts are to be submitted for expenses claims.

### **Absenteeism**

- No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise can be imposed on volunteers to attend. However, if absence is expected it would be appreciated if volunteers could inform their supervisor as far in advance as possible.
- Where a role requires good time keeping or regular attendance, Creative Lives may ask a volunteer who is frequently absent or who attends erratically, to consider a different role, or to take a break from volunteering.

### **Volunteers and Benefits**

- Creative Lives acknowledges that volunteering will not adversely affect people in receipt of benefits provided they are honest and direct with benefits agencies. For example, in England:
  - People are allowed to volunteer while claiming state benefits, including means-tested benefits such as jobseeker's allowance (JSA) and employment and support allowance (ESA).
  - You can still volunteer if you're on universal credit as long as you also undertake any activities, such as job searching, training or other requirements, identified by your Job Centre Plus adviser. This is likely to be part of a claimant commitment.
- Volunteers in receipt of benefits should notify benefits advisers and seek further guidance as necessary.
- Creative Lives cannot offer detailed advice on welfare benefits to potential volunteers. It is the responsibility of potential volunteers to enquire with the relevant benefits service as to how volunteering may affect them financially.
- Creative Lives will offer to supply written details of what voluntary work is being undertaken, hours worked, and a breakdown of the

- expenses claimed by the volunteer.
- Creative Lives will advise volunteers to get in touch with local welfare benefits organisations to seek professional advice and guidance regarding benefits.

### **Refugees and asylum seekers and volunteering**

- People who have refugee status or humanitarian protection, and their family members, are allowed to do any type of work including voluntary work and can also volunteer.
- Asylum seekers (people in the process of applying for refugee status) and family members are not normally allowed to work while their claim is being decided, but they can volunteer in both the public and voluntary sectors. This includes while they are appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum.
- In the UK it is Home Office policy to support asylum seekers volunteering for charities or public sector organisations. However, this must not amount to engagement as an 'employee' or a 'worker' and it is the responsibility of the individual and the organisation they are volunteering for to check that such activity does not mean they are working in breach of conditions. The organisation should also undertake all relevant safeguarding checks required.
- If an individual meets the definition of a volunteer, there is no requirement for them to have the right to work in the UK and therefore no right to work check is required.
- Volunteering can be undertaken at any stage of the asylum process, but such activities must not interfere with scheduled events such as a substantive asylum interview, regular reporting event or re-documentation interview. These events will not be rescheduled to accommodate volunteering.
- More information from the UK Government:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-applications-for-permission-to-take-employment-instruction>

### **Moving on**

- Creative Lives recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time. Creative Lives requests that where possible volunteers give as much notice as possible.
- Creative Lives also requests that volunteers give their reasons for leaving, share any learning points or recommendations, and whether or not they may wish to be involved again in the future.
- Creative Lives will provide references for current or former volunteers on request.

## **8. WHEN THINGS GO WRONG**

### **Complaints and problems**

Complaints or difficulties arising will be dealt with as quickly as possible and Creative Lives will not act in a discriminatory manner because a volunteer

has raised an issue or made a complaint.

### **Making a complaint**

Volunteers have the right to complain if they have been unfairly treated. Volunteers will be encouraged to discuss issues informally to facilitate a speedy resolution of any problems. How this takes place will depend upon the nature of the voluntary work undertaken, e.g., office based or in the local community.

#### **Stage 1 - Oral complaint**

- Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, should be discussed with the volunteer's supervisor. If the complaint is about the supervisor, then the matter should be referred to the supervisor's line manager. During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.
- If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the Creative Lives Chief Executive Officer.

#### **Stage 2 - In writing**

- Volunteers making a complaint in writing to the Creative Lives Chief Executive Officer should do so within two weeks after making an oral complaint.
- Creative Lives will respond to written complaints within two working weeks of receipt.

#### **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

- If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal to the Chair of the Creative Lives Board. An investigation will be carried out by the most appropriate person on behalf of the Chair. If a meeting is arranged with the volunteer, the volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair will respond to the appeal within four working weeks of receipt, and the Chair's decision is final.

### **Problems**

If someone complains about a volunteer, the volunteer has the right to be told why they are being disciplined, the right to state their case and the right to appeal.

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the organisation, who act unlawfully in the course of their volunteering or who fail to satisfactorily perform volunteer assignments may be asked to leave. However, this will not happen without the volunteer having had the opportunity to discuss the reasons for their behaviour and the organisation's response with relevant staff.

#### **Stage 1 – oral discussion**

- Sometimes minor issues can arise during the course of volunteering, such as a volunteer not fitting into the team as well as was expected, not meeting the required standards when undertaking tasks or being unreliable. Such issues are usually detected during regular supervision and will normally be resolved by discussion between the volunteer and

supervisor without resorting to formal procedures.

**Stage 2 – written warning**

- If the issue cannot be resolved by oral discussion, the supervisor may issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the supervisor, to the supervisor's line manager or to the Creative Lives Chief Executive Officer, and to be accompanied by a person of their choice. If the issue cannot be resolved after a written warning Creative Lives may decide to ask the volunteer to leave.

**Stage 3 – Right to appeal**

- If a volunteer has been asked to leave, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of the Creative Lives Board. An investigation will be carried out by the most appropriate person on behalf of the Chair. If a meeting is arranged with the volunteer, the volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair will respond to the appeal within four weeks of receipt, and the Chair's decision is final.

Creative Lives reserves the right to ask a volunteer to leave at any time and for whatever reason without further recourse. The volunteer is entitled to relinquish their position at any time, for any reason without further recourse.

**9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Creative Lives monitors and evaluates its volunteer programme on a continual basis. Supervision notes, exit interview notes, feedback from volunteer meetings and other relevant material may be collated to help identify and plan improvements for the programme.

Re-approved by the Creative Lives Board of Directors, 15 April 2020.

This policy will be reviewed before December 2023.