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**Southampton Mencap**

**Volunteer Handbook**

**Introduction**

Because we value our volunteers so much, we want to make volunteering with Southampton Mencap a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone. This guide explains how we do that, as well as telling you more about us and about your role as a volunteer. If you would like a copy of any of our policies then please ask the Activities Development Worker.

**Background to Southampton Mencap**

Southampton Mencap was founded in the 1950’s by a group of parents for mutual support, to campaign for the acceptance of people with a learning disability and to provide appropriate services.

Southampton Mencap is both a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. A Board of Trustees, all volunteers, oversee the running of the organisation and appoint professional managers and staff to run the different areas of work. They meet bi-monthly to make decisions relating to proposals and policies and to ratify decisions.

Membership is made up of parents/carers, local business and professional people and supporters of Southampton Mencap.

Services run by Southampton Mencap are housed within the Mencap Centre and out in the community around Southampton. Leaflets detailing our different services can be found at the end of this pack. Volunteers may find it helpful to refer to these to learn about some of what the organisation does.

**Our aims are to:-**

* Respond to the needs of people with a learning disability and their family in a flexible and appropriate manner; and support families/carers to have short breaks from their caring responsibilities.
* Deliver information which is timely, appropriate and up to date on a range of issues relating to learning disability.
* Raise awareness locally to the rights of people with a learning disability and their families by jointly working with others who share our goals in making a difference.
* Encourage more participation of those with a learning disability and their families to get involved and have a say in the future planning of the organisation.
* Represent views of people with a learning disability and their families so that their voices are heard and learning disability issues are taken into consideration at all levels.
* Raise funds to support our existing services and to develop new services
* Support our staff by being a good employer, providing opportunities for staff development in order to professionally deliver our services.

**How you can get involved.**

As a volunteer, you can get involved in many different activities.

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**Supporting children and adults**

This could be helping someone with a learning disability to take part in activities in one of our Clubs, providing support through our Independent Visitor Service or assisting a student to achieve greater independence in our Own2feet Programme.

**Assisting families/carers**

You may help families/carers through providing educational advice as an Independent Parental Supporter or assisting with events and activities designed especially for Carers’ e.g. monthly lunch time sessions.

**Supporting Southampton Mencap’s vision and purpose**

This could be through helping with fundraising activities and/or activities that promote our services and projects.

**Using your expertise in our services**

You may have skills and experience to share, perhaps with IT, general administration, writing for newsletters or gardening/maintenance. Our board of trustees also seek people with professional experience e.g. management/HR/finance.

**What you can gain by volunteering.**

* **A sense of achievement**
* **An opportunity to learn or develop a new skill**
* **Experience to boost career options and enhance a C.V.**
* **An opening to meet a diverse range of people**
* **The chance to make a positive difference in someone’s life**
* **Personal and social development**
* **Opens up access to training and development**
* **A reference, if one is required.**
* **Can join in occasional social activities with colleagues.**
* **Getting satisfaction from doing something worthwhile with any spare time.**

**What we expect from you.**

* **To carry out duties to the best of your ability**
* **Enthusiasm and commitment**
* **To respect and adhere to our policies and procedures**
* **To support and encourage all members to participate in activities**
* **To work as part of a team in providing activities and enabling members to make choices**
* **To carry out any task e.g. setting up and clearing away before and after an activity, that you have been asked to do.**
* **To declare any conflict of interest and not bring the organisation into disrepute**

**Induction and Training**

Mencap is committed to ensuring that all volunteers receive an induction and appropriate training for their role.

Before volunteering everyone, in addition to receiving a copy of our Volunteer Policy, attends training which covers such things as: -

* An introduction to the organisation including its history and background, its current activities and services
* Keeping vulnerable people safe from harm that includes looking at key aspects from our Safeguarding Children & Young People and Protecting Vulnerable Adults policies, associated procedures and supporting information.
* Considering Health & Safety including why we make Risk Assessments. Also advice and information around your personal safety.
* Explaining what is meant by “confidentiality” when supporting children and vulnerable adults
* Raising awareness of disability and learning disability and how this affects individuals and their families/carers
* How to communicate more effectively with our client group
* Learning about strategies and how to manage challenging behaviour
* Understanding what is meant by inclusion, diversity and equality of opportunity
* Also relevant practical matters e.g. how to claim expenses

Additionally all new volunteers are introduced to colleagues (paid staff and other volunteers) and members of our Clubs and activities or individual clients (in regard to the Independent Visitor Service). “Shadowing opportunities” and/or “taster sessions” are also arranged, as appropriate to help our volunteers settle in and feel comfortable in their role.

As part of the induction all volunteers are also expected to undertake some online training (See appendix A).Volunteers will also be informed about other relevant training courses, as appropriate.

Volunteers wishing to become, for example, a visitor with the Independent Home Visitor Service or a Parental Supporter with the Southampton Parent Partnership Service, will be required to do additional training specific to that role.

**Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly known as the Criminal Record Bureau)**

As volunteering with Southampton Mencap brings volunteers in contact with children and vulnerable adults, it’s essential, as part of a raft of safeguarding practices and procedures, that all volunteers are appropriately screened as to suitability to volunteer with our clients. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and acceptable documents that evidence identity together with other relevant information will be required. As obtaining acceptable information may sometimes be complicated, it’s our practice to treat everyone as an individual and give appropriate advice and support to enable the DBS check to be done.

Volunteers must also inform Southampton Mencap if at any stage of their volunteering with the organisation they receive a conviction or are subject to adverse child protection proceedings or any other circumstances that could impinge on the credibility of the organisation.

**References**

Two references will be taken and no volunteer will commence a placement with the organisation until both references are received and are satisfactory. References do not necessarily need to be from an employer/former employer. If providing a reference proves a barrier to some prospective volunteers, the volunteer is urged to seek advice from the Activities Development Worker.

**Personal safety and ID cards**

Should an emergency occur and we need to contact someone on your behalf, you will have given details of an emergency contact person. It’s your responsibility to let us know if these details change.

You will also be issued with a volunteer ID card which you should always have with you when carrying out your activities. You should always ensure that you let someone know where you are going and what time you will be back.

**Personal Standards**

The way that volunteers dress and personal appearance are a major factor in good customer relations so it is important to look as smart as possible e.g. no jeans/brief shorts. All volunteers should ensure that standards of dress and appearance, as indicated during the induction are maintained.

Personal behaviour will also reflect upon Southampton Mencap, and volunteers should therefore take care to behave in an appropriate manner whilst at work or when representing the organisation.

**Gifts**

Because our volunteers are really appreciated sometimes a small gift e.g. a box of chocolates, may be offered by a member or their family/carers which may be accepted but anything else, especially money, must be refused.

**Expenses**

Travel expenses will be offered to cover the expense of travelling from the volunteer’s home to the place of volunteering activity. You can claim any out-of -pocket travel expenses such as bus/rail fair or car mileage. When volunteers use their own transport e.g. car, a record of the mileage must be kept. All claims must be made on the appropriate Volunteer Expense claim form (See appendix B) and receipts must always be provided. Expenses should be handed in by the 21st of each month.

**Volunteer Role Description**

Our volunteers enhance the service that we are able to provide our members and their families/carers and give vital support to our paid members of staff. To avoid any misunderstanding or ambiguity as to what their voluntary roles are and what tasks and responsibilities are involved and to ensure that what they do is interesting and satisfying , all volunteers have a written description of their role, a Volunteer Role Description, which is explained to them prior to commencing volunteering.

**Availability and Commitment**

We value whatever time our volunteers can offer us and understand that for some this may be several hours over a sustained period. However, we urge you to consider how much time you wish to commit and to be careful before engaging in volunteering that you do not end up putting too much pressure on yourself and being unable to fulfil your voluntary commitment. From our perspective its best to have a volunteer whose able to commit a few hours long term than someone who gives a lot of time which they cannot sustain.

On occasions when a volunteer is unable to attend because of other commitments, e.g. a period of study or ill health, the Activities Development Worker and where appropriate, the supervisor of the activity is to be advised of the reasons and the expected period of absence wherever possible.

**Support**

All volunteers will be supported by staff such as the Club supervisors and the Activities Development Worker. Volunteers will have regular meetings with the Activities Development Worker to talk through their experiences and identify any issues or support needed. Volunteers are also invited to general staff meetings to enable them to feel part of the Mencap team, have their say on various topics and meet like-minded people. We also like to recognise the hard work of our volunteers by nominated them for special awards.

**Resolving Issues**

If you are unhappy with the service or a member of staff, firstly speak to either the Activities Development Worker or the Supervisor at the club to see if the matter can be resolved. For details, should you wish to pursue issues further, please refer to the Volunteer Problem Solving Policy.

**Health and Safety**

We have a duty of care towards all our volunteers. Southampton Mencap will make sure that you are in a safe and healthy environment, taking appropriate steps to reduce any risks you may face. You also have responsibility for your own health and safety and that of the people you’re helping. It’s expected that if a volunteer sees any fault or hazard, they report it. We will give you information about our Health and Safety policy, including how to report incidents and make risk assessments.

**Confidentiality**

Volunteers must maintain confidentiality at all times, as explained in the induction training session. For this reason, when you complete your induction training you are also asked to sign an acknowledgement in a copy of the Confidentiality policy. This means that confidential information about people we support, volunteers, and Southampton Mencap employees is only shared with their consent and on a need to know basis. All confidential information should be rigorously safeguarded.

**Safeguarding**

Safeguarding forms an important part of your induction and volunteers will undertake an e-learning module as well as gaining a better understanding of this area through their induction training. All volunteers working with children and young people must take reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to the individual’s welfare are minimised through being able to know and recognise the types of abuse, signs and symptoms and what to do if you suspect abuse. Volunteers involved with our Clubs and activities are required to hand in their mobile phones to the Club supervisor at the beginning of each session.

**Equality and Diversity**

We are committed to a policy of treating all volunteers and volunteer applicants equally and fairly. We accept volunteers based on their suitability for the role. We won’t discriminate against any volunteers because of their age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic background. We will protect volunteers from discrimination, abuse and harassment by service users and other staff.

Southampton Mencap aims to ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly in all circumstances. Mencap has clear procedures on steps to take if any person feels he/she has been subject to discrimination, harassment bullying and intimidating behaviour and any such issues will be taken seriously. We expect all our volunteers to subscribe to the principles and practices of the Southampton Mencap Equal Opportunities Policy and will be made familiar with its contents during induction training.

**Acknowledgement**  Copies of key and important policies, procedures and supporting information sheets such as those relating to **Safeguarding Children & Young People, Protecting Vulnerable Adults, Health & Safety, Confidentiality, Equal Opportunities** will be provided.

During the induction period volunteers will be guided through the content of these documents and will, before taking up their role, sign an acknowledgment form to confirm that they have seen and understood the content. Copies of such documents will be given to volunteers and may also be referred to in the Volunteer Information File. Additionally volunteers will also confirm that they have undertaken and completed any modules of training that have been carried out via e-learning and will provided copies of the certificates confirming the successful completion of such modules.

**Volunteering while claiming benefits**

You can volunteer for *as many hours as you want,* as long as you still meet the

conditions to get your benefit or tax credit. Please refer to the information contained in the Jobcentre Plus leaflet (found in this pack.)

If you are receiving benefits, before you start any volunteering you must let Jobcentre Plus, the local council or whoever pays the benefit know what you intend doing.

It is acceptable for Southampton Mencap to refund you any genuine out-of-pocket expenses e.g. travel costs, without it affecting your benefit or credit.

For tax credit purposes, any expenses you get for doing voluntary work will usually be disregarded when it comes to working out your income.

If you are getting an income-related benefit, like Income Support, Jobseeker’s Allowance, Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive for doing voluntary work. You will also need to keep all your receipts, to back up your claim.

**Finishing your Volunteering**

Southampton Mencap appreciates volunteers giving adequate and appropriate notice of their intention to leave as this helps with the smooth running of our work and services and importantly enables us to advise our members accordingly. We would be grateful if you would complete an Exit Questionnaire form so that we can learn from your experience of volunteering with Southampton Mencap. If you have been volunteering regularly with us then we will be glad to provide a reference should you require it.

**APPENDIX A**

**SOUTHAMPTON MENCAPS ONLINE TRAINING**

All volunteers have a requirement to complete some online training modules before starting volunteering with us.

The two modules you are required to complete are

**“Safeguarding Children”** and **“Working with Parents”** which form Block 1 of the E-learning package found on [www.kwango.com](http://www.kwango.com)

Please go onto the website [www.kwango.com](http://www.kwango.com) (User Name is Mencap and the Password is mencapcentre) and follow the instructions.

When you have completed the module please print off the certificate and hand it into the office.

**APPENDIX B**

**Southampton Mencap**

**Volunteer Expenses Claim Form**

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Period of Claim From: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Amounts Claimed**

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| --- | --- |
| **Miles** | **Amount Claimed** |
|  | **£** |

**Total other travelling e.g. rail fares, car parking, bus fares etc.**

|  |
| --- |
| **£** |

**Total Amount Claimed**

|  |
| --- |
| **£** |

**PLEASE TURN OVER FOR FURTHER DETAILS AND TO SIGN.**

**FORMS NEED TO BE RETURNED TO THE OFFICE BY 21ST OF THE MONTH. EXPENSES ARE PAID BY CHEQUE**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **From** | **To** | **Reason for Journey** | **Miles** | **Public Transport, Fares, Car Parking, etc.** |
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Claimant Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Approval Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Useful Contact Details**

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