



Volunteer policy

This policy applies to volunteers giving their time free of charge to Parenting Special Children as Peer Supporters or in any other capacity. It does not apply to trustees who are governed by the Charity's governing document (Articles of Association) and Membership and Management Policy unless the trustee is also giving their time as a volunteer outside of their trustee role.

The trustees and staff of the charity recognise that much of the work of the charity is supported by volunteers and places the highest value on the time, energy and skills that volunteers bring to the organisation. Where they are volunteering as peer supporters, volunteers provide a significant part of the PSC service and through the provision of emotional support they bring about positive change for parents/carers. PSC also recognises that working with volunteers increases the charity's contact and involvement with the local community.

PSC's commitment to volunteers

PSC is committed to providing a positive environment and fulfilling opportunity to all those who donate their time, energy and skills freely to the charity. In particular PSC will endeavour to:

- ensure that volunteers are effectively integrated into the organisation
- encourage the involvement of volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds so that the charity is representative of the community in Reading
- expect staff at all levels to support and work positively with volunteers
- try to resolve any difficulties, complaints or difficulties
- ensure that volunteers are clear about the role they are performing and the boundaries of that role
- provide opportunities to help volunteers develop and acquire new skills.

The volunteer's commitment to PSC

PSC hopes for the following commitment from its volunteers:

- to familiarise themselves with the aims of the charity and through their efforts work to further these aims
- to undertake any training provided that is necessary to perform the role
- to fully inform themselves of the responsibilities they have in respect of confidentiality, data protection, safeguarding, equal opportunities and health and safety by reading the appropriate PSC policies provided by their supervisor

- to communicate with PSC if they are unavailable or unable to fulfil a commitment
- to work with the staff and trustees to resolve any difficulties, complaints or difficulties
- to behave in a manner which upholds the values of the charity and which will not bring the charity into disrepute
- to seek support and supervision as much as necessary

Equal opportunities

PSC recognises the contribution that a wide range of people with diverse cultures, experiences, beliefs, skills, and of a wide age range, can bring to the organisation and is committed to widely promoting opportunities to join the organisation.

Likewise volunteers are expected to embrace and uphold PSC's commitment to equal opportunities in their dealings for the charity. In the event of discrimination or harassment (of another volunteer, staff member or trustee of the charity or of a service user) by a volunteer the matter will wherever possible be dealt with by offering support and supervision to the volunteer. If, despite reasonable effort being made by PSC staff to resolve the issue, concerns persist, the relationship with the volunteer will be terminated.

How do you become a volunteer with PSC?

All prospective volunteers will be given a role description stating the requirements for the role, including skills and experience. They will be provided with an opportunity to discuss the position informally with the service coordinator and will be asked to attend an interview. If a voluntary role is offered, the new volunteer will be provided with an induction into the charity and necessary training (see below).

All volunteers will be required to provide two references and undertake a face-to-face interview prior to the role being confirmed. The exception to this are volunteers supporting the Auticulate programme as peer mentors, who have themselves followed the Auticulate programme and are known to the supervisor; they need only provide one external reference. Peer mentors not already known to Auticulate will follow standard PSC procedure: two external references.

Volunteers who wish to undertake a peer support role will be expected to follow the full peer supporter training programme to the satisfaction of the service coordinator.

PSC will request enhanced DBS checks on all new volunteers and this check must be completed to the satisfaction of the CEO before the volunteer undertakes any activity that brings them into contact with any service users, or that gives them unsupervised access to any PSC service user data (such as Charitylog records). Records of these checks are maintained in a secure database by PSC administrative staff. See the PSC Safeguarding Policy.

Young volunteers

PSC is committed to providing opportunities to young volunteers, where this is appropriate and where they can be adequately supported. PSC recognizes the value that young volunteers can bring to the work of PSC and the benefits that the experience brings for their own development. Young volunteers may be invited to support the work of the Auticulate service as peer mentors. Most peer mentors will be aged 16-18 but PSC will extend this opportunity to those aged 14 or 15 where the supervising staff member feels that this would be mutually beneficial. In this case, a supervising adult will be readily available and on hand to support the young person. No young person who is in full-time education will be permitted to volunteer for more than 2 hours on any one day, in accordance with Reading Borough Council guidelines on children in employment.

How PSC works with volunteers

Induction

The induction procedure for volunteers will include the provision of all relevant role descriptions, policies and procedures and a familiarisation with the charity's offices and the work of the charity in general. Volunteers will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement indicating that they understand the boundaries of their role and what is expected of them. See Appendix – Volunteer Agreement.

Expenses

PSC is keen to involve volunteers with the relevant skills regardless of their financial situation. As such all volunteers are welcome to have reimbursed upon production of a receipt their reasonable and genuine out-of- pocket expenses e.g. travel or childcare (for one-off training or other events as agreed with the supervisor on a case-by-case basis).

Any reimbursement for expenses is not a consideration for services, and so does not affect benefits in any way and is not subject to income tax or national insurance.

Support and Supervision

Volunteers will have a named member of staff as their direct supervisor. They will be provided with one-to-one supervision sessions to feed back on progress, discuss future development and air any problems. Peer supporters will be required to attend group supervision sessions as directed by their supervisor. Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation. PSC aims to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage.

Training

PSC will provide training appropriate to the role the volunteer is performing, with signposting to relevant training run by other organisations.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by PSC Public Liability Insurance whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of PSC as long as they are working within the boundaries of the role defined in the task description.

Feedback

PSC aims to provide a volunteering environment that is enjoyable and rewarding. It welcomes feedback from volunteers on the quality of the volunteering experience it offers.

Problems or Complaints

If volunteers have a problem or complaint they should follow the PSC Complaints and Feedback Policy. All volunteers are expected to adhere to the policies and uphold the aims of PSC, and as its representatives behave in an appropriate manner. If a volunteer behaves, or is suspected to have behaved in a manner likely to cause offence or bring PSC into disrepute, the volunteer's supervisor will discuss the matter with the volunteer. If, despite reasonable effort being made by PSC staff to resolve the issue, concerns persist, the relationship with the volunteer will be terminated. The CEO has the authority to prevent any individual from volunteering with PSC, although any such decision will be made within the principles of the PSC Equal Opportunities Policy.

PSC Policies and Procedures

Volunteers with PSC are expected to adhere to the policies and procedures of the organisation. It is the responsibility of each volunteer's supervisor to ensure that all policies and procedures are read and understood by the volunteers.

The following policies are particularly important for volunteers:

Complaints and Feedback Policy

Volunteers who wish to raise a concern or make a complaint should do so in accordance with the PSC Complaints and Feedback Policy. The first step as outlined in this policy will always be to talk to your supervisor, or the CEO or a trustee of the charity.

Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy

Volunteers have a responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of service users and are expected to be familiar with and follow the PSC policies on confidentiality and data protection.

Volunteers are expected to abide by these policies. In the event of a breach of confidentiality or data protection procedures, the matter will wherever possible be dealt with by offering support and supervision to the volunteer. If, despite reasonable effort being made by PSC staff to resolve the issue, concerns persist, the relationship with the volunteer will be terminated.

Volunteers must also follow PSC's guidelines on 'Safe use of IT systems and data storage'.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Volunteers working on behalf of PSC have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of vulnerable adults and children and should be fully conversant with the PSC Safeguarding Policy. In particular volunteers should understand that safeguarding concerns override confidentiality, and they should know the procedure to follow in the event of a safeguarding concern.

PSC Service Coordinators, in consultation with the CEO, are responsible for assessing the safeguarding training needs of their volunteers. Requirements are likely to be as follows:

- **Volunteers whose role includes contact with adult service users**, even where this is only over the telephone, should, as a minimum, undertake Universal Safeguarding Training, as they may receive a disclosure.
- **Volunteers whose role includes direct contact with children at PSC family events or clubs should** as a minimum, undertake Universal Safeguarding Training, and should also follow the requirements of PSC's 'Procedure for safeguarding at PSC events attended by children and young people'.
- **Volunteers whose role is limited to administrative functions** where there is no contact with service users are not required to undertake any specific safeguarding training.

In the event of an allegation of harm towards a child being made against a PSC volunteer, PSC will have recourse to its 'Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer'. All volunteers whose role brings them into direct contact with children or young people should be familiar with this procedure.

Health and Safety

Volunteers have the same status as employees when it comes to health and safety and legislation applies equally to them. Volunteers should be fully conversant with the PSC Health and Safety policy and inform themselves as to their responsibilities in respect of taking appropriate measures to ensure their own safety. Peer supporters should pay special attention to the training they receive on personal safety when lone working.

Whistleblowing

Everyone at PSC, including volunteers, should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing. Individuals volunteering on behalf of PSC should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of in accordance with the PSC Whistleblowing Policy.

Associated PSC documents and policies

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following PSC policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
 - Procedure for safeguarding at PSC events attended by children and young people

- Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Safe Use of IT systems and Data Storage
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Resources used to draw up this policy

This policy was drawn up with reference to the above PSC policies as well as to the RVA Volunteer Policy.

Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed by the PSC board of trustees every two years.

This policy was adopted by the trustees in October 2016, reviewed in January 2019 and revised in October 2019 (amendment to sample volunteer agreement)

Review date: January 2021

APPENDIX – SAMPLE VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

For an official copy of this document, please see the staff member responsible for HR

As a volunteer, you are vital and valued part of Parenting Special Children. We appreciate your time, knowledge and skills that you offer to the charity. We hope that your volunteering experience with us will be a positive and rewarding one. This volunteer agreement describes the arrangement between Parenting Special Children and volunteers.

Part 1: Parenting Special Children

What you can expect from Parenting Special Children while you are volunteering with us:

The staff team at Parenting Special Children (PSC) undertake to provide you with:

- A clear role description so that you know what your role covers.
- A named staff member(s) who will support and supervise you.
- An informal induction to enable you to carry out your role effectively.
- A copy of the charity's policies and procedures
- Personal development opportunities in your volunteering role - these will vary according to your volunteering role, your previous experience and the availability of opportunities.
- Relevant training opportunities – these will vary according to your volunteering role, your previous experience and the availability of training.
- Details of relevant training and information events run by other services.
- Payment of reasonable travel expenses for your PSC volunteering, through the completion of an expenses form.
- Adequate insurance cover for you while you undertake voluntary tasks that we have approved and authorised.
- Advice and support from a staff member, in dealing with any problems or difficulties you have in your volunteering role.

Part 2: Volunteer

What we hope for from you:

While you are volunteering with us, PSC asks you to uphold the following principles:

Aims of the Charity

Parenting Special Children aims to provide information and support to families where the children have additional needs with empathy and understanding.

I agree to respect these aims as a Volunteer, particularly if I am in contact with parent/carers e.g. when answering the phone in the office.

Equality and diversity

I agree to treat everyone that I am in contact with in the course of my volunteering, with dignity and respect. I will recognise the value of each individual person and their experience.

Confidentiality and data protection

During the course of volunteering I may have access to information of a confidential nature. This could be as simple as having access to a person's address, hearing very personal details about a parent/carer or their family or reading information about the charity that has not yet been made public. This information should be regarded as confidential and should not be shared outside of the organisation, without the agreement of PSC staff or Trustees.

I agree to respect the confidentiality and sensitivity of information that may be shared with me as a PSC volunteer.

Health & Safety

I will not act in a way which puts myself or others at risk.

Supervision and Training

I agree to meet with a member of PSC staff on a regular basis, dependent on my volunteering role and previous experience.

I agree to attend training and information opportunities, dependent on my volunteering role and training needs, as agreed with PSC staff.

Policies

I agree to read and familiarise myself with the PSC policies on Safeguarding, Confidentiality, Data Protection, Complaints and Feedback, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities and to ask for clarification of anything that I do not understand.

Part 3: Declaration

If you agree to join Parenting Special Children as a Volunteer and understand the above arrangements, please sign below:

Volunteer

Signed:

Print name: Date:

PSC Staff member

Signed:

Print name: Date:

Important Note

This arrangement is required in honour only; it is not a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time on the good judgement of either the Volunteer or Parenting Special Children.