



# Volunteer Policy

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Responsible Manager (Sponsor)	Assistant Director – Operational Support Services
For use by	Volunteers and Volunteer Managers

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) policy for including volunteers in its work and to set out the general principles and guidelines for volunteering, to ensure consistent standards and good practice.

1.2 In particular the policy will:

- Provide a framework for all NWAS staff when considering the use of volunteers.
- Provide a foundation on which individual volunteer schemes will be based.
- Provide a consistent set of guidelines to ensure volunteers are supported during their volunteering role.

1.3 Volunteers provide a service to patients and their relatives. Their role is intended to complement NHS services and it is not intended that they will be used as a direct replacement for paid employment opportunities.

1.4 NWAS recognises the benefits of using volunteers including:

- offering alternative ways to involve and engage with communities.
- offering credibility to NWAS as giving their time for free suggests that the work NWAS does is of value to the local population.
- bringing new perspectives.
- helping to extend the services we offer.

## 2. Scope and Definitions

2.1 The principles set out in this Policy apply to all individuals who undertake a volunteer role directly on behalf of the Trust. Where NWAS has arrangements with third party providers for the provision of voluntary support e.g., co-responder schemes, individual volunteers will be covered by the host organisation's policies.

2.2 A volunteer is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward.

2.3 Volunteers are not employees and are not obliged to commit their time to NWAS. At the same time NWAS is not obliged to provide opportunities for voluntary activities when a volunteer is available. This means that any agreement with a volunteer is binding in honour only and is not intended to form a contract. For clarity this means that there is no entitlement to benefits such as sick pay or annual leave.

2.4 Staff may also act as volunteers, outside of their paid employment. Where the voluntary role undertaken is different from their employed role, for example an administrative member of staff undertaking Community First Responder duties, they will be covered by this policy in terms of induction training and support. Reference should also be made to the separate procedure relating to Staff Volunteers.

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### **3. Types of Volunteering Activities**

3.1 Volunteers may be used in a variety of ways in NWS but the following are the most frequent volunteering opportunities available:

- Community First Responders – individuals who volunteer to provide a limited emergency response in their communities helping us to respond to patients more quickly than we may be able to otherwise.
- Volunteer Car Drivers – supporting the transport of mobile patients to and from hospital appointments.
- Critical Friends and other community engagement – supporting NWS to understand the needs of patients and communities through engagement and consultation activities.
- Staff Responder – (see Staff Responder policy).
- Welfare volunteers – Individuals that volunteer their time to offer welfare facilities such as teas and coffees based at the hospital.

### **4. Responsibilities**

#### **4.1 Directorate leads and line managers**

4.1.1 The overall responsibility for the operation of a voluntary scheme lies with the relevant line management in the responsible directorate. Managers will take responsibility for ensuring that staff within their area are aware of the policy and any specific arrangements for the use of volunteers in their area. They are also responsible for inducting volunteers and providing ongoing support and monitoring of their activities and ensuring that volunteers undergo an appropriate recruitment and selection process and that they are safe to work with patients.

#### **4.2 Staff**

4.3.1 Staff are responsible for being aware of the policy and for recognising the valuable contribution that volunteers can make to the quality of care offered to patients.

#### **4.4 Volunteers**

4.4.1 Volunteers are responsible for ensuring that they follow the guidelines in this policy and any detailed guidance applicable to their Volunteering activity. This is often set out in a memorandum of understanding which volunteers will be expected to sign to indicate their acceptance prior to commencing voluntary activity.

4.4.2 All volunteers have a responsibility to take account of the Working Time Regulation principals in terms of their overall working hours including their volunteer hours.

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## 5. Recruitment and Selection

- 5.1 Recruitment and selection processes in use for volunteers will be appropriate to the voluntary activity being undertaken but in line with the guidance on the use of volunteers issued by the Department of Health and consistent with the regulations governing employment checks in the NHS. This requires that certain checks are undertaken to ensure the safety of volunteers and staff engaged in direct patient related activity. For example, this means that all volunteers engaged in patient related activity will be required to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, provide references and may be required to undergo some health screening.
- 5.2 NWAS is however, mindful of the need to encourage volunteers from all sections of the community and will proactively consider how volunteers are recruited and how the recruitment and selection procedure can be adapted to recognise the voluntary nature of the role. Recruitment will be conducted in line with the NWAS Equal, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure.
- 5.3 In line with national recommendations following the Saville review, volunteers working undertaking patient facing voluntary activity with the Trust will be required to undergo three yearly DBS check to ensure their continuing suitability to act in a voluntary role.

## 6. Induction and Training

- 6.1 All Volunteers will receive an induction which will provide background information regarding the Trust, information about the activity they will be undertaking, the standards of behaviour they will be expected to meet, key contacts, and any administrative arrangements, such as how to claim expenses where these are appropriate. Some of this information may be provided in the form of a Handbook (for PTS Volunteer Car Drivers) or Memorandum of Understanding (for Community First Responders) but it will always be supplemented by a personal induction from a relevant member of staff from the directorate in which they will be volunteering.
- 6.2 Volunteers will be provided with any training necessary to carry out their volunteer role. In most cases induction will be sufficient to meet the training needs of volunteers but some voluntary activity, such as Community First Responder schemes, will require specific training. In these cases, the local manager will be responsible for ensuring that any relevant training is refreshed at appropriate intervals.
- 6.3 Where appropriate volunteers may be issued with equipment to enable them to carry out their voluntary activity.

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## **7. Use of Volunteers**

7.1 Volunteers are not under any obligation to offer their time to NWAS and NWAS is not under any obligation to use volunteers when they indicate that they are available. A volunteer should never be coerced to give of their time as it must remain a free choice for someone to offer to volunteer.

7.2 Obviously good communication between volunteers and NWAS is critical to ensure that patients are not let down in the services we deliver. The specific arrangements for advising NWAS of availability will vary between schemes and, where it suits volunteers they will be able to indicate their availability in advance.

## **8. Reimbursement**

8.1 In some cases volunteers will be able to claim for actual expenses incurred. The circumstances in which an expenses claim can be made will vary according to the Volunteer activity and the details will be provided to volunteers during induction. The following is not an exhaustive list but is indicative of the types of expenses that a volunteer may incur and for which they may be able to claim reimbursement:

- Mileage and associated expenses
- Cleaning costs where clothes have been soiled
- Telephone calls
- Subsistence claims on long journeys

8.2 Volunteers will be advised of the relevant forms on which they can make expenses claim. All claims will have to be authorised by an appropriate manager and volunteers will be asked to provide bank details to enable expenses to be paid direct into their bank accounts.

8.3 Volunteers should be aware that there is a mileage limit that volunteer drivers may travel before they have to declare their income received through voluntary driving to the HMRC. Once this limit is reached volunteers may be required to pay income tax on some of their expenses. The limit varies and further information can be obtained from the HMRC website.

8.4 In addition, any expenses received may be classed as income by HMRC or the Benefits Agency and volunteers are advised to discuss their volunteer activities with the relevant body if they have any concerns. NWAS is not in a position to provide tax or benefits advice.

## **9. Ongoing support**

9.1 Managers must ensure that volunteers are supervised to an appropriate level and are aware of whom to approach for advice and guidance if needed. Each volunteer will be advised of the relevant manager or supervisor who can provide ongoing support during the course of their voluntary activities.

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## 10. Standards of Conduct

- 10.1 Volunteers are representatives of the Trust and must always maintain a level of professionalism and courtesy when dealing with patients and members of the public.
- 10.2 Volunteers are expected to be respectful of different customs, values, sexuality, religion, belief, age or social background. Volunteers are expected to abide by the general code of conduct provided in Appendix 1 and any more detailed guidance provided in their induction.
- 10.3 Although volunteers are not employees they will be expected to follow relevant Trust policies, such as those relating to infection control, patient confidentiality, health and safety and equal opportunities. Relevant information will be provided to volunteers at induction to ensure that they are aware of the standards they are expected to adhere to when undertaking voluntary activity.
- 10.4 The NHS Constitution establishes the core principles and values underpinning the delivery of NHS services in England. It establishes the responsibilities and values to which all NHS organisations and those working for them should adhere, both in the delivery of care and in their day-to-day activities in the workplace with colleagues, patients and members of the public. The Trust fully adopts the NHS Constitution and also sets out its own core values and guiding principles. All volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with the NHS Constitution and the Trust's core values and to ensure that their behaviours reflect these at all times when they are undertaking voluntary activity and representing the Trust.
- 10.5 Where there is a complaint or issue raised about the conduct of a volunteer this will be investigated by NWAS. The volunteer affected will be given the opportunity to provide their version of events as part of the investigation. As there is no obligation to offer any voluntary activity to a volunteer, it is highly unlikely that a volunteer's services will be used whilst an investigation is ongoing. Once the investigation is complete the volunteer will be advised of the outcome and reasons for it. During any investigation, a Welfare Officer will be assigned.
- 10.6 NWAS reserves the right to cease using a volunteer where their conduct is felt to fall short of what is expected.
- 10.7 Staff Volunteers should be aware that their conduct as a volunteer could affect their employment. This is where their conduct as a volunteer brings the Trust into disrepute or their conduct substantially affects the employee's capability to work or indicates their unsuitability for their employed role. In these circumstances staff may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure for activities undertaken in a voluntary capacity.
- 10.8 Where appropriate, volunteers engaged in patient facing activity may be subject to enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks at regular intervals during their use as a volunteer. The requirement and frequency of such checks will be identified in the MOU for the volunteer groups affected. Where a volunteer refuses to

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undergo a regular check then the Trust reserves the right not to utilise them as a volunteer.

## **11. Problem Solving Procedure**

11.1 It is recognised that there may be occasions when difficulties arise in the relationship between either individual volunteer and NWAS management, including difficulties relating to conduct or behaviour of a non-clinical nature between volunteers and management or other employees of NWAS. As Volunteers are not employees and therefore those NWAS investigative and disciplinary policies and procedures which relate to employees and are designed to conform to employment law are not appropriate for volunteers. Where either an NWAS employee complains about the conduct or behaviour or a volunteer makes such a complaint about a NWAS employee, the good practice recommended by Volunteering England will be followed:

11.2 The emphasis, wherever possible, will be on informal resolution.

- Problems or complaints will initially be discussed between the volunteer or employee and a member of the local management team who is not directly involved in the matter. In some cases, it may be that more training or support is needed, especially if the issue is related to a volunteer or employee's attitude or behaviour. The NWAS manager who is responsible for the initial discussion may set a time in which they can monitor the situation to find out if the problem or concern has resolved itself.
- Where attempts at informal resolution are unsuccessful, the volunteer or employee will be asked to put the matter in writing to the identified local manager. NWAS will review the issue and respond to the volunteer or employee within 20 working days of receipt of the letter. If the CFR or employee remains dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to raise their concern/grievance with the Senior Manager responsible for the volunteer within 20 working days of receipt of the letter. The decision of that manager will be final.
- In appropriate cases, mediation by a suitably qualified impartial third party may be used with the agreement of the parties involved in the problem.

## **12. Raising Concerns at Work**

12.1 The Trust has a responsibility to create an environment where individuals feel able to raise concerns in confidence. If you become concerned about safety, malpractice or wrong doing whilst undertaking voluntary duties for the Trust you have a responsibility to raise these concerns. This includes concerns which may affect patients, the public, staff or the organisation. Details of how to raise a concern can be found in the Memorandum of Understanding for your voluntary role or in the Trust's Freedom to Speak Up Policy and Procedure which can be found on the Trust's intranet / Green Room or relevant Trust website.

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### 13. References

13.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant NWAS policies such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure. In addition, it has been developed in light of the following documents:

- NHS Employers Employment Checks Standards, 2019
- Staff Responder Policy
- NHS Long Term Workforce Plan
- NHS Volunteering Taskforce – report and recommendations
- Trust strategy and supporting strategies

### 14 Monitoring

14.1 The Director of Organisational Development is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and compliance with this policy.

14.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored by review of occasions when there are complaints raised by volunteers or where there are conduct issues with volunteers. Issues will be reported by exception.

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## Appendix 1: Volunteer Code of Conduct

The following Code of Conduct sets out the basic expectations that NWAS has of volunteers who are undertaking voluntary activity and representing the Trust. It should be read in conjunction with any detailed guidance provided in connection with a specific volunteer Scheme or provided at induction.

Volunteers must:

- Be polite, courteous, tactful and professional, showing respect for all individuals irrespective of their background.
- Not share political or personal views which would not be representative of the Trust
- Ensure that all patient related information is kept confidential in line with the Trust's Patient Confidentiality and data protection policies.
- Only make expenses claims which are accurate and relate to genuine out of pocket expenses, necessarily incurred in the course of voluntary activity. This includes ensuring that where volunteers are transporting patients they do so by the shortest and most practical route.
- Maintain appropriate standards of dress and presentation.
- Ensure that they meet the required standards of fitness to carry out a voluntary role and inform NWAS where there has been a change in their health status which might affect volunteering.
- Ensure that they are fit to carry out voluntary activities when they have made themselves available, this includes not being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Ensuring that their car is fit for purpose and meets infection control standards if it is being used for voluntary activities.
- Ensure that they meet road traffic legislation and requirements if using their car for voluntary activities.
- Not exceed the level of care for which they have been trained as this could place patients at risk.
- Ensure that they look after their own and patient's safety at all times not contact the media or respond to the media about their volunteering activities.
- Not accept any offers of gifts, hospitality or gratuities from patients.
- Adhere to the values set out in the NHS Constitution and Trust statement ensuring that behaviours and conduct whilst representing the Trust reflect these values.

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