

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE VOLUNTEER POLICY

Richmond Borough Mind (RB Mind) values the contribution made by volunteers, who donate their time, skills and experience, and without whom we could not deliver the services or respond to the needs of our service users in the way that we do. RB Mind defines a volunteer as %a person who willingly undertakes work on behalf of others outside of their immediate circle not in return for wages or other form of consideration+. This policy applies to all volunteers at RB Mind. It outlines our core principles informing our involvement of volunteers as well as our guidelines in place for doing so.

2.0 CORE PRINCIPLES

- RB Mind will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to RB Mind's work.
- RB Mind will not use volunteers to replace paid staff.
- RB Mind expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- RB Mind recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.

3.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

RB Mind welcomes new ideas and an approach generated by people from different cultures, backgrounds, genders, ages and outlooks and operates an equal opportunities policy to reflect this. In particular, we welcome volunteer applications from people who have experienced difficulties with their own mental health or who have used mental health services. A copy of the Equal Opportunities policy is available on request from the volunteer co-ordinator. Some people face obstacles to volunteering and RB Mind will work with volunteers to overcome those difficulties where possible.

4.0 RECRUITMENT

RB Mind welcomes applications from anyone wanting to volunteer provided the volunteer has the skills for the specified roles that we need help with. The role descriptions will give the volunteer detailed information on what is included. RB Mind encourages its service users to take an active role in the projects they use. If a service user would like to volunteer with an RB Mind project, they will be asked to apply for the volunteer role following the normal procedure and will discuss their suitability for the role with the Volunteer Co-ordinator. They will be given support to volunteer, with recognition of their mental health needs, in line with the support and supervision received by all our volunteers.

- 4.1 **Application Form:** Volunteers are asked to complete the volunteer application form which asks for contact details, experience and skills relevant to the role, any additional support needs in order to carry out the role, a declaration of criminal convictions, and contact details of two referees whom RB Mind can approach for references (Referees should ideally be people who have known the volunteer for at least a year and who can comment on a volunteer's skills, and should not be a family member).
- 4.2 **Interviews/Informal Discussion:** All volunteer applications will be considered by the Volunteer Co-ordinator. The prospective volunteer may be invited for an informal interview / discussion with the Volunteer Co-ordinator to find out more about what they would like to do as well as their skills and experience. Their suitability to carry out the volunteer role will be judged against the skills

required for that role. The interview is also an opportunity for the volunteer to gain as much information as possible about RB Mind.

Shortly after the interview the volunteer will be informed by the co-ordinator of the result of their application and if successful an invitation will be made to visit the project on an informal basis and discuss their role with the service lead who will be their volunteer manager. Should the visit prove successful a start date will be agreed pending suitable references and a DBS check being received by RB Mind.

- 4.3 **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks:** All volunteering roles within RB Mind require completion of a DBS check. This check applies to staff and volunteers who through their roles have direct contact with either service users or their personal information. The DBS check will need to be completed by the volunteer with RB Mind's volunteer co-ordinator. There is a small administration cost which will be paid for by RB Mind.

If a potential volunteer has criminal convictions, their application and suitability for the role applied for will still be considered and discussed with the person concerned. More information is detailed in the Equal Opportunities Policy which is available on request from the volunteer co-ordinator.

- 4.4 **Role Descriptions:** All volunteers will be given a role description including an explanation of the tasks that they are expected to perform. The role will be discussed and agreed with the volunteer before they start their placement. Some role descriptions will include a minimum or maximum time commitment from volunteers. Volunteers are not restricted to doing these tasks and can discuss changing the tasks with agreement from the volunteer manager.

- 4.5 **Volunteer Agreement:** Volunteers are asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement establishing that they have read and understood what their voluntary commitment entails and what RB Mind undertakes to provide for them. The Volunteer Agreement is not a contract and RB Mind has no intention of creating an employment contract with any volunteers.

5.0 INDUCTION OF VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers will receive an induction into RB Mind and their volunteer role. This includes meeting relevant staff and volunteers, a tour of the building, and an introduction to RB Mind's services. Volunteers will be shown what tasks they will be expected to undertake and given any relevant training.

- 5.1 **Volunteer Handbook:** Every volunteer will receive a copy of the Volunteer Handbook when they start volunteering at RB Mind. The Handbook gives details about all the services provided by the organisation, RB Mind's policies and guidelines about volunteering with us.
- 5.2 **Training:** Training will be provided as appropriate to the volunteering role. It may be on-the-job training or group training. The volunteer coordinator will inform volunteers about opportunities to participate in additional training whenever course places arise internally or externally.
- 5.3 **Feedback and evaluation:** All volunteers will be encouraged to express their views about matters concerning RB Mind and its work during their supervision meetings and via feedback forms.

6.0 PROBLEM SOLVING / COMPLAINTS

Whilst we hope that volunteering with RB Mind will be a positive experience, during your time as a volunteer you may find you have cause to make a complaint against a member of staff, another volunteer or a service user of RB Mind. We hope that most problems can be solved informally and encourage volunteers wherever possible to raise these directly with the person concerned so that they can be addressed, or via a meeting with the volunteer manager and/or the volunteer co-ordinator. For information about making a formal complaint please refer to the Complaints Policy.

7.0 VOLUNTEER EXPENSES

RB Mind is committed to ensuring that volunteers are not left out-of-pocket for volunteering with RB Mind. Therefore we reimburse travel and lunch expenses according to the guidelines below. More detailed information is in the Expenses Policy.

- 7.1 **Travel:** Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses spent travelling to your volunteering placement and back home, covering London Zones 1-6 or up to a total of £10.00 per journey.
- 7.2 **Lunch:** Up to £5.00 reimbursed if volunteering for more than 4 hours a day.

8.0 SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

- 8.1 **Support:** Volunteers will be provided with support and supervision from their volunteer manager. This will usually be the service lead for the project they are volunteering in. One to one meetings as and when required will be arranged to feedback on progress, discuss future developments and air any problems. The frequency of the meetings will depend on the nature of the volunteer role, but volunteers are encouraged to ask for support or guidance at any time.
- 8.2 **Absence / Illness:** Volunteers play a valuable role at RB Mind and are relied upon by staff to fulfil their agreed duties at stated times. Volunteers are asked to inform their supervisor as soon as possible if they are unable to turn up or expect to be late. We also appreciate advance notice in respect of holidays and days off.
- 8.3 **Leaving:** Where possible volunteers should make their volunteer manager as well as the volunteer coordinator aware of their plan to leave. Each volunteer will be invited to share their thoughts about their volunteering experience either via a one to one meeting or feedback form. The purpose of this is for RB Mind to learn how the volunteering experience has been for the volunteer and to make positive changes in future.
- 8.4 **References:** RB Mind will provide references for all volunteers who have been volunteering with us for a minimum of three months.
- 8.5 **Volunteer Recognition:** RB Mind values the contribution made by all its volunteers and appreciates the time freely given to support the organisation. Volunteers are included in social events with Staff and Trustees throughout the year.

9.0 OTHER POLICIES

Volunteers are expected to comply with RB Mind's policies on Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Equal Opportunity, Data Protection, Managing Violence and Aggression, Complaints and Health and Safety, all of which are available on request from the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

10.0 INSURANCE

All volunteers are covered by the RB Mind insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on behalf of RB Mind.

**Thank you for reading this policy.
We hope you will enjoy your time volunteering at RB Mind.**