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Bishop Creighton House Volunteering Policy

Introduction

Bishop Creighton House (BCH) is a multipurpose charity and community centre in Hammersmith & Fulham. BCH aims to help people to live safe, healthy and independent lives. We welcome and appreciate the time and energy volunteers give. Volunteers are crucial to BCH; without their skills and enthusiasm much of its work simply could not be done.

BCH seeks to involve volunteers in all areas of its work particularly in providing befriending services to isolated and lonely older people and mentoring to younger people with learning disabilities. Volunteers also help in the offices, with fund-raising, events and in many other ways.

BCH currently runs five outreach projects that facilitate independence and wellbeing for families, older people and young people with learning disabilities, through practical home improvements, home safety and security, and mentoring / befriending.

Principles

This Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

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

Practical Guidelines

A volunteer is a representative of BCH. The public's perception of BCH is dependent upon their contact with BCH and this contact is often via the volunteer. It is therefore important that volunteers follow these guidelines, and to contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Project Manager with any concerns or queries. These guidelines complement induction training and the volunteer handbook. Volunteers can also have a copy of each of the relevant BCH policies. The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers.

Recruitment

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to find out what they would like to do, their skills, suitability and how best their potential might be realised.

Volunteer Agreement & Role Description

Each volunteer will have a Volunteer Agreement establishing what BCH undertakes to provide for them. They will also have a written outline of the specific role they will be undertaking. Neither of these documents is a contract; BCH has no intention of creating a contract with any volunteer. Each volunteer will also receive a Volunteers' Handbook.

Induction and training and Support

All volunteers will receive basic induction training. We encourage volunteers to attend ongoing relevant training. All volunteers will have a named person as their main point of contact (usually a Volunteer Co-ordinator) and will be provided with regular supervision or support groups to meet other volunteers, feedback on progress, discuss future development and air any problems.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff. We will respect the privacy and personal information of volunteers, and we ask volunteers to act similarly to all people coming in to BCH and to those receiving our services. We ask that you observe the BCH Confidentiality Policy at all times. This is available to volunteers at Induction.

Staying in touch

Volunteers are expected to keep in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator or Project Manager, and to keep them informed of any changes in their situation, or their ability to volunteer. This can be done via phone, email, post or in person.

Expenses

We positively encourage all volunteers to claim expenses. Expense claim forms can be obtained from Volunteer Co-ordinators. We do not want any volunteer to be out of pocket as a result of offering their time to us.

- BCH will reimburse any reasonable costs incurred during the course of voluntary work. This includes any transport costs to and from a member's home, or to and from BCH, phone calls, postage and a lunch allowance of up to £3.50 if volunteering longer than 3 ½ hours. Volunteers may also claim back expenses for occasional items bought for clients, but should always check first with staff before purchasing such an item. We normally pay expenses by cheque. Volunteers should complete a volunteer expense claim form and attach receipts or details of travel. Receipts must be provided when claiming expenses.
- Mentors have a general limit of £12 a month; however if needed Mentoring Plus may pay more than that if discussed with the project coordinator first.

Alcohol and drug use

No volunteer should be using drugs at any time whilst volunteering for BCH. Volunteers should not consume excess alcohol whilst volunteering and should not be under the influence of alcohol. Small amounts of alcohol may be consumed, for example: on a trip, at a BCH party or at a befriending/mentee meeting in a pub. Volunteers should not remain with a client who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Volunteers should remove themselves from this situation and inform a member of staff immediately.

Equal Opportunities

BCH operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of and commitment to our equal opportunities policy. No volunteer should be treated in a way that breaches our Equal Opportunities policy. Every volunteer should treat clients, staff and fellow volunteers within the boundaries of our Equal Opportunities policy. If you ever encounter any form of behaviour that breaches this policy, please inform a member of staff as soon as possible. A copy of our equal opportunities policy is available at Induction.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

Anyone volunteering with BCH will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check. Having a criminal record will not necessarily exclude someone from volunteering. For more information, please refer to BCH's Ex-Offenders Policy

Money and financial advice

It is advisable not to handle a client's money. However, volunteers may need to buy an occasional item from a shop. In this case volunteers should always write out a receipt for any monies that are taken out of the home or hospital before the goods are purchased, and proceed only if the client is fully aware of the amount of money taken, the cost of the goods, and the amount of change returned to them. If volunteers encounter any difficulties or have concerns about monetary transactions, they should contact a member of staff immediately.

Volunteers should never handle *large* amounts of money or give financial advice. Volunteers could however perhaps help set up a budget. This should be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers should not accept legacies left to them in the will of a client. Volunteers must inform a member of staff immediately if informed that a client wants to, or has left money to them in a will.

Gifts

Volunteers should never accept monetary gifts from a client, however small. Volunteers are discouraged from accepting other gifts from clients. However, if volunteers are given a small, inexpensive and occasional gift to mark a special occasion, this is ok as long as staff are informed

If clients want to give a financial contribution towards volunteering, they can make a financial donation to the project as a whole. Staff can give details of how to do this.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the BCH insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any role on behalf of BCH. Volunteers will not be covered by our insurance policy if they undertake any task that breaches our guidelines.

Health and safety

Volunteers are covered by BCH's Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which is available to volunteers. It is important volunteers take an active role in ensure their own health and safety and should not take on a task that could result in injury to themselves or a client. If an accident does occur it should be reported to the BCH office immediately.

ID cards

We issue ID cards to all BCH volunteers who are home visitors, in support of the police campaign to make vulnerable people safer in their homes. This card should be carried at all times when volunteering and should be shown to clients when you first meet them. The card should be returned to the Volunteer Co-ordinator when someone ceases to be a volunteer.

Volunteers on benefits

If in receipt of any Government funded benefit volunteers themselves are responsible for informing the appropriate agency of their volunteering at BCH. We are happy to confirm in writing that volunteers are not receiving any payment for their volunteering, and only receive out-of-pocket expenses.

Problem Solving

BCH aims to provide a friendly and supportive environment for volunteers and to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. If you find we have failed in any way, please let us know. You can make an official complaint through the project staff. We will deal with all complaints according to our Complaints Policy.

Volunteers can also be subject to a complaint from a client or fellow volunteer; all such complaints will be investigated according to our Complaints Policy, and the volunteer can be asked to leave if they are found to have breached our guidelines. Please refer to the BCH Complaints Policy.

Dismissal

Volunteers who do not adhere to the guidelines and policies of BCH or who fail to perform their voluntary work satisfactorily are subject to disciplinary procedures or dismissal.

If there is a disciplinary issue, volunteers can expect as part of this process:

- Supportive and constructive feedback
- Clear details of the inappropriate behaviour
- Suggestions regarding what and how to improve and an agreed period of time to demonstrate improvement after each stage.

Volunteers may be dismissed immediately if we believe there is sufficient cause e.g.

- A breach of confidentiality
- An act that brings BCH into disrepute
- An act that contravenes BCH's health and safety policy
- Any verbal or physical act that contravenes our equal opportunities policy
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- False declarations of any kind made in relation to securing your role here
- Failure to follow reasonable instructions from a Project Manager
- Physical or verbal abuse of a client, staff or fellow volunteer
- Theft of property or misuse of BCH funds, equipment or materials

Note: the above list is not exhaustive.

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