

Gateshead Older People's Assembly DRAFT Volunteer Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The aims of the Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly are:

To listen to and represent the views of older people in Gateshead

To be the source of information for older people in Gateshead

To improve the quality of life for older people in the community and in care.

1.2 At the Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly we are committed to involving a diverse range of local people in our work in both formal volunteering and community activity. We do this because we believe that:

- Volunteers, in their diversity of age, cultural background, experience and their involvement with communities bring to our work a value which adds to our understanding and response to older people's needs
- Through the involvement of volunteers we contribute to the building and support of active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect
- The development and support of vibrant community networks and individuals within them is vital to the wellbeing of older people
- We work more effectively with and on behalf of older people by providing opportunities for local people to use their skills, knowledge and experience through volunteering
- As volunteers who reflect the diversity of their communities, local people bring different skills and perspectives to those of the professional paid staff, which adds value to our work
- People of all ages care about and want the opportunity to contribute to making later life a more fulfilling and enjoyable experience for everyone

- Older people with whom we work value the involvement of volunteers
- By involving volunteers we can offer opportunities for genuine involvement, learning and development for individuals
- Volunteers are a major resource, and without their contribution we would only be able to achieve a small percentage of our work with and for older people

1.3 Volunteering is defined by Volunteer England as, “an activity that involves spending time unpaid that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups, other than (or in addition to) close relatives”. Therefore a volunteer is defined as anyone that gives their time freely to undertake activity on behalf of the Gateshead Older People’s Assembly without financial remuneration beyond the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses.

1.4 At the Gateshead Older Peoples assembly our volunteers:

- Serve on our Board
- Help with the delivery of our services
- Are active in projects and community led activities supported by us
- Campaign with and on behalf of older people
- Help raise funds to support of work

1.5 We believe that our relationship with volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which the Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly and volunteers have both rights and responsibilities. We aim to ensure that volunteers enjoy their involvement with us and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives.

2. Purpose of this policy

2.1 Our purpose in this policy is to:

- Highlight and acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteers
- Reflect the purpose, value, standards and strategies of The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly in its involvement of volunteers

- Recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers with The Gateshead Older people's Assembly
- Confirm the commitment of The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly to involving volunteers in its work
- Establish clear principles for involvement of volunteers, clarify their roles and the relationships between them, those who involve them and those who receive their services or work alongside them
- Help to ensure the quality of both volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by volunteers
- Acknowledge the current areas of involvement of volunteers within The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly
- Ensure fairness and consistency when dealing with a diverse group of individuals

2.2 This policy is meant for internal management guidance only and does not constitute, neither implicitly nor explicitly, a binding contractual or personal agreement. Matters in areas not specifically covered by the volunteers policy shall be decided by the Intergenerational Volunteer Coordinator and Assembly co-ordinator.

3. Scope of the policy

Unless specifically stated the policy applies to all Volunteers in all programmes and projects undertaken on behalf of The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly, to all its departments and sites of operation and to all volunteer Board members.

4. Statement of principles of good practice

4.1 General

When involving volunteers we will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Tasks and roles will be clearly defined so that all concerned with volunteer's activities are sure of their respective roles and responsibilities
- Records will be kept of work done by volunteers as a basis for monitoring, and volunteers will have access to their records

- Volunteers roles will complement, not replace, the work of paid staff
- Existing and future policies will be checked as to how they affect volunteers
- A mechanism will be established by which the policies and procedures on volunteers can be monitored and reviewed

4.2 Recruitment and selection

- The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly's equal opportunities statement will be adhered to when recruiting and selecting volunteers
- Volunteer opportunities will be promoted in accordance with our agreed methods for recruiting volunteers so that there is a wide accessibility to what we offer
- Volunteers are required to complete a registration form
- Written role outlines will layout time, commitment, necessary skills and experience and actual duties required and whether a criminal records bureau disclosure is required
- We will ensure that procedures are in place to cover good practice requirements for volunteers selected to work with children and/or vulnerable older people
- It is our practice to request two references for each potential volunteer
- People who offer to volunteer will have their offers dealt with as quickly as possible
- Volunteers will be placed in activities that match their skills, experience and interests, and once placed they will be required to comply with the Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly's existing policies and procedures

4.3 Support for volunteers

- We will invest financial and personnel resources for the management of volunteers. This will be laid out in the Generations Together project budget and development plan
- We will provide an induction programme and review session for volunteers to assess the progress of their placements and resolve any problems at an early stage

- We will provide funding for volunteers out of pocket expenses. Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim
- We have written documentation for the insurance of volunteers
- Volunteers will be given information on legislation and other policies which may affect them e.g. Health and Safety and Diversity and Equality. In this respect volunteers will be treated in the same way as staff for liability purposes
- All volunteers will be offered access to support and supervision on a regular basis with a named person (usually the intergenerational volunteer co-ordinator), and will be informed of who to contact in an emergency
- All volunteers will be offered access to appropriate training to develop their capabilities and competence in relation to their volunteering role
- Opportunities will be available to change a volunteers responsibilities as desired by the volunteer and appropriate to The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly's needs
- Volunteers will be made aware of The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly's complaints procedure and problem solving procedure and whom to contact if they have a grievance about any aspect of their work
- A designation person will be assigned responsibility for dealing with complaints about a volunteers conduct in accordance with the general procedures of The Gateshead Older people's Assembly

4.4 Rights and Responsibilities of volunteers

In engaging volunteers we recognise the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is expected of them and give clear information
- Have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- Be shown recognition and appreciation
- Have safe working conditions
- Be insured
- Know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong

- Be paid out of pocket expenses
- Be trained and receive ongoing opportunities for learning and development
- Be free from discrimination
- Experience personal development through their participation as volunteers
- Ask for a reference
- Be consulted on decisions which affect what they do
- Withdraw from voluntary work after a discussion with the Intergenerational Volunteer Co-ordinator

We expect that volunteers will:

- Carry out their volunteer roles in a way that corresponds to the aims and values of The Gateshead Older People's Assembly
- Work within agreed guidelines and remits
- Be reliable
- Respect confidentiality and follow our confidentiality policy
- Attend training and support sessions where agreed
- Not discriminate against staff, other volunteers, members and others associated with The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly
- Maintain the good name of The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly

4.5 Relationship with paid staff

- We will ensure that paid staff at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers and that good working relations are fostered between them and our volunteers
- If appropriate, consultation arrangements with Trade Unions or staff association will be clearly established
- Volunteers will not be engaged in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular work, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties
- We aspire to provide appropriate training, support and resources for all of those who work alongside our volunteers

- Volunteers will be given clear information about the roles undertaken by paid staff and of their value to The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly
- The intergenerational volunteer co-ordinator will oversee the implementation of this volunteer policy and will keep up to date with good practice guidelines in volunteering

4.6 Relationships with other groups or organisations meeting the needs of older people

In all of our relationships with other groups, organisations or partners we will:

- Promote volunteering as an important means of contributing to the building and support of active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect
- Promote good practice in volunteering

4.7 Local Volunteering

We will develop relationships with the local voluntary sector (those organisations that promote volunteering) on the following principles:

- There is a need for a strategic approach in developing volunteering locally
- There is a need to support the work of local volunteering development agencies (e.g. GVOG) in providing leadership in developing awareness of and standards of practice in volunteering locally

4.8 Action plans and reviewing policies and procedures

- The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly will produce an annual plan for volunteer involvement
- The Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly will monitor and review this policy and all procedures on volunteering on an annual basis
- A member of the management committee and the Intergenerational Volunteer Co-ordinator will undertake this monitoring and review roles

4.9 Responsibility for the policy

Overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of the policy and procedures lies with the management committee and on a day-to day basis with The Assembly coordinator.