



Volunteering Policy	
Responsible Person:	Deputy CEO
Date Reviewed by Board of Trustees:	May 2023
Date to be implemented:	May 2023
Next Review Date:	May 2024

Bipolar UK Volunteering policy

Bipolar UK is a national charity dedicated to supporting individuals with the much misunderstood and devastating condition of bipolar, their families and carers. Bipolar UK appreciates the contribution of all volunteers in helping us achieve this aim.

Bipolar UK acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique, and that volunteering can benefit our service users, staff team, local communities and our volunteers themselves.

Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Bipolar UK. It is of relevance to all within the charity, including volunteers, trustees and staff.

The policy is endorsed and approved by the Board of trustees. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate to the needs of Bipolar UK and our volunteers, and compliant with all legislation.

Our Commitment

Bipolar UK is committed to ensuring that volunteer roles are appropriate, and that adequate training and support is provided for all volunteers. This includes providing encouragement and support for volunteer's personal development.

Bipolar UK recognises its responsibility to coordinate its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of volunteer's time is best used to the advantage of all concerned. Bipolar UK also recognises its responsibility to ensure that volunteering is conducted in a safe and supportive environment.

Definition

Volunteering is the donation of time without expectation of remuneration, gifts of monetary value or future employment. Volunteers are people who are, unpaid and contribute their time, energy and skills of their own free will to the benefit of the charity and those we serve.

Statement of values and principles

Volunteering is an important activity that is supported and encouraged by Bipolar UK and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements, but does not replace, the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between staff members and volunteers.

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise the charity cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer. Furthermore, both the volunteer and Bipolar UK can end the relationship at any time and for any reason without notice.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what Bipolar UK expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of us.

Recruitment & Selection

Bipolar UK is committed to equal opportunities and believes volunteering should be open to all regardless of disability race, sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. At present, individuals must be over the age of 18 to volunteer with Bipolar UK.

As an employer and engager of volunteers Bipolar UK is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. This principle will apply to service delivery, recruitment, promotion, training, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible as possible, and reasonable adjustments will be made where possible to accommodate the needs of volunteers.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the charity or referred to the nearest Volunteer Centre.

All volunteers will be asked to complete an application form, produce two references, to satisfactorily complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check and will be invited to attend an informal assessment either in person or over the telephone.

Volunteers will have a clear role description and will be properly briefed about the activities which are expected to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform them with confidence.

New volunteers will receive an induction to the work of the charity, and will be contacted by Bipolar UK regularly for the duration of their volunteering with updates about the charity and other relevant information.

Training & Development

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to the charity's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, privacy, data protection, health & safety, safeguarding vulnerable groups and equal opportunities.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for Bipolar UK in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the team manager to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend relevant training, and to request further training if they deem it necessary.

Support, Supervision and Recognition

Volunteers will have a named team or named staff member within a team to whom they can seek support, guidance and discuss issues around volunteering. Bipolar UK staff will be committed to ensuring that the volunteering experience is safe, enjoyable and rewarding.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and Bipolar UK to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be agreed between the volunteer and Bipolar UK.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views.

Volunteers have the right to request a reference, which will be a professional reference outlining their role, start and finish dates and not character based.

Expenses

Bipolar UK recognises that the reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in traveling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering, including relevant training sessions held by Bipolar UK, is important from an equal opportunities point of view. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

Bipolar UK's volunteers are able to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure and a completed expenses form. Please note Bipolar UK will only reimburse expenses, and only after these documents have been received. What can be reclaimed from the charity and the calculation of expenses will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses. There should also be pre-agreement with the volunteer supervisor or manager prior to incurring personal expenses.

The charity has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses, which are the same for volunteers and staff. Unless specifically agreed, all expenses are reimbursed through BACs payment directly to your nominated bank account. If you do not have a bank account, please speak with your team member directly.

Insurance

Bipolar UK's liability insurance policies include the authorised activities of volunteers and liability towards them. Volunteering activities are to only take place in previously agreed locations to ensure that all volunteering activities are covered by Bipolar UK insurance policies.

Bipolar UK does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

Confidentiality

Bipolar UK will train and advise the volunteer on its confidentiality policy and procedures, where relevant. This includes those relating to personal information held by the organisation relating to the volunteer.

Volunteers are expected to follow Bipolar UK confidentiality policy and maintain the confidentiality of confidential information regarding the charity, its service users, volunteers and staff at all times. This includes compliance with GDPR.

Settling Differences

Bipolar UK aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The charity seeks to ensure volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon in a timely manner and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the charity's guidelines for settling differences.

If you have any concerns, please speak with your nominated team member/team in the first instance as together we will endeavour to resolve the problem as soon as possible. If an informal resolution proves impossible, Bipolar UK's Complaints Policy will be referred to. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role, or to leave the charity.

Rights and Responsibilities

Bipolar UK recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them.
- have adequate support in their volunteering.
- receive appreciation.
- volunteer in a safe environment.
- be insured.
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong.
- receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses.
- receive appropriate training.
- be free from discrimination.
- [the charity will] take volunteer feedback and complaints seriously.
- be offered the opportunity for personal development.

- be covered by the same health and safety policies and provisions as staff.

Bipolar UK expects volunteers to:

- be reliable.
- be honest.
- act responsibly and within the law
- respect confidentiality
- attend training and make the most of support and training opportunities.
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the charity.
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines and policies.
- respect the work of the charity and not bring it into disrepute.
- comply with the charity's policies, guidelines and management decisions.
- inform Bipolar UK of changes to personal circumstances that may affect their volunteering.
- provide Bipolar UK with up-to-date contact information so that Bipolar UK can contact them when appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents and policies:

- Lone working policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Data protection policy
- Safeguarding policies
- Volunteer Handbook
- Confidentiality policy