

## BRIDGING THE GAP ISLINGTON

# Volunteer Policy

### 1. Introduction

Bridging the Gap Islington works with and values a combination of volunteers and paid staff. We believe that volunteers and paid staff can make complementary contributions to our work. Volunteers bring freshness, enthusiasm and new ideas. Paid staff contribute consistency and expertise. We aim to ensure that both volunteers and paid staff benefit from and enjoy their work with Bridging the Gap Islington. We expect both volunteers and paid staff to behave responsibly and undertake the work they have agreed to do. Mentors will generally be volunteers and some of the training and support roles will also be carried out by volunteers.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of Bridging the Gap Islington.

### 3. Aims

Bridging the Gap Islington aims to ensure that:

- Volunteer mentors have a defined place in the structure of the organisation
- Volunteer mentors agree on an amount of time they can commit to that must be a minimum of 1 hour a week but generally less than 10 hours a week
- Volunteer mentors feel supported and valued in their role through a comprehensive induction to mentoring
- Volunteer mentors understand and have a clear outline of their responsibilities through the recruitment and induction process
- Staff understand and have a clear outline of the volunteer mentor's responsibility through a copy of the volunteer policy.

### 4. The Volunteer Mentor Role

The volunteer mentor works on a one to one basis with the service user. Volunteer mentors may have individual partnerships on a long or short term basis, which can depend on the type of goals outlined by the service user. Typically, they work with someone to support them during a change in their life e.g. transition from prison to community, or where the service user has stated that they would like to make progress/change through mentoring. The mentor will help the service user identify issues that they would like to work on, and take steps together to achieve these goals.

### 5. Recruitment

Bridging the Gap Islington seeks to recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds (see Equal Opportunities policy). Volunteers must be over 18. Bridging the Gap Islington will generally not accept:

Candidates who have not lived away from their parental home for at least 6 months. These candidates will be encouraged to get further experience before mentoring.

Candidates who have not participated in regular weekly activities (education, training, volunteering or work) in the last 6 months. These candidates may benefit from a mentor and will be encouraged to consider this.

All candidates will be asked about criminal convictions and are required to have an enhanced DBS check before mentoring. We will accept DBS checks for a similar purpose undertaken for another organisation within the past 6 months provided that the volunteer provides a photo identity document. Having a criminal record will not generally prevent a person from mentoring. If a volunteer has a criminal record, the co-ordinator in consultation with other people, will make an individual decision about the volunteer's suitability and will record this decision.

## **6. Training and Induction**

Each potential volunteer will be invited for two training sessions, and finally to an informal interview. Each volunteer mentor will receive basic training about mentoring before they enter their mentoring partnerships. As well as this they will receive training regarding health and safety, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, lone working, and confidentiality.

If it appears that a potential volunteer mentor would benefit from additional experience, then they may be offered some short-term voluntary work as an introduction to working with people at risk of offending.

Volunteer mentors will be paired with a service user following Bridging the Gap Islington Matching procedure. Each volunteer mentor will have a supervisor who they will regularly meet with to discuss how they are progressing and if they have any additional training needs. Before mentoring begins, service user, referrer, mentor and supervisor will meet initially to get to know each other.

## **7. Support**

The supervisor assigned to the volunteer mentor will be their main point of contact regarding mentoring. They can contact their supervisor with any concerns or for advice/reassurance. Additionally, they can also contact the service user's referrer after consent from their supervisor, for any information about which the referrer may have more knowledge.

If the matter is serious and neither supervisor nor referrer is able to help, the volunteer mentor can contact the coordinator of Bridging the Gap Islington. All contact to supervisors, referrers or coordinator should be at appropriate times.

Volunteer mentors are expected to inform their supervisor of the times they plan to meet the service user and to let them know when the meeting has finished. Supervisors should be in contact with volunteer mentors about once a week. Volunteer mentors will review with their supervisor on a one to one basis every four to eight weeks.

## **8. Expenses**

Reimbursement - Payments are made in arrears based on receipts for any reasonable expenses above the expenses that the volunteer would normally incur. This includes payments for the service user while they are doing something together with the mentor. In the case of an individual expense of over £20, the mentor should get the prior agreement of their supervisor and the expense should be for an activity that helps to meet the mentoring goals.

Where possible, we prefer to make monthly payments direct to the mentors bank account. But we are committed to ensuring that mentors are not short of money as a result of mentoring. So we will, if necessary, either make more frequent payments, or alternatively pay the mentor an initial up-front payment of £20 which they will be asked to repay when the mentoring is completed, subject to our financial control policy.

## **9. Insurance**

Volunteer mentors are insured under public liability insurance.

## **10. Health and safety**

- Each volunteer will have a health and safety hand out.
- Each volunteer will undertake basic health and safety training.
- Volunteers will be made aware of general health and safety and personal safety.
- Volunteers will know how to report an incident or accident that they or their partners have.

## **11. Diversity**

Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding and commitment to equal opportunities and diversity (See Equal Opportunities policy)

## **12. Problem-Solving**

The complaints procedure is the same for everyone, though who you complain to depends on your role. (See complaints procedures)

## **13. Confidentiality**

The same confidentiality is applied for volunteer mentors as well as paid staff and comes under our confidentiality and data protection policy. Volunteer mentors are also receive confidentiality hand out at training.

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