



VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Our Vision... is to meet needs and increase opportunities and always to provide excellent housing and services which people value.

In 2008 St Vincent's agreed a 5 year Vision with 4 priority areas:-

- Striving for excellence.
- Delivering our offer to older people
- Delivering our offer to younger people
- Developing services and investing in neighbourhoods.

Introduction

St Vincent's Housing Association actively supports the principle that everybody has a right to volunteer, and are committed to promoting volunteering as a significant and positive contribution to improving the lives of vulnerable people and strengthening communities.

Involving volunteers in our activities brings a diversity of skills and experience to our work, assists us in meeting the needs of our clients and enriches the involvement we have with local communities.

Principles

Volunteering should be for the mutual benefit of all those involved, we recognise that people volunteer for different reasons, whether it is to acquire new skills or make new friends

We will:-

- ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the Association
- provide the necessary support to carry out their role
- provide opportunity for personal development
- expect staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers

Practice Guidelines

The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers. More detailed information and copies of other relevant policies are detailed in the Volunteer hand book.



Recruitment and work outlines

Volunteer opportunities will be advertised or promoted in the local area where we work.

Volunteers may be recruited for specific projects, or to enhance a service provided to customers. The volunteer will assist with the work of St Vincent's in delivering on our Vision for the future.

Prospective volunteers will be invited to an informal interview to establish more about their skills, experience, and availability. References will normally be requested.

The volunteer will be given a written outline of the work they will be undertaking and details of the Association. The work outline assists in clearly defining the role of the Volunteer, agreeing assigned tasks and helping Staff to have a clear understanding of the role.

Equal Opportunities

St Vincent's Housing Association is determined to make sure it does not discriminate or allow discrimination against any person who volunteers, or is seeking a volunteering opportunity with the Association. No volunteer or volunteer applicant should receive less favourable treatment than others because of their colour, ethnic or national origin, creed or religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, responsibility for dependants, or disability. It believes that every individual, whether an individual of any of the above groups or not will be able positively to contribute to the work of the Association.

Criminal Records Checks

The Criminal Records Bureau is an executive agency of the Home Office who provides access to criminal record and other information to organisations in England and Wales through a service called 'disclosure'.

Its specific purpose is to help organisations make more informed decisions when recruiting people into positions of trust. It is also available to other professional, licensing and regulatory bodies whose volunteers, employees and licensees are not necessarily in direct contact with the vulnerable, but still need to uphold the highest standards of professional performance and disclosure can help improve these recruitment decisions as well.

The primary purpose of the Criminal Records Bureau is to help organisations make safer recruitment decisions. There is no cost to the applicant for this requirement.



These will be carried out for those volunteers who will be working with or in contact with vulnerable clients. Information obtained will only be used to assess the applicant's suitability for the volunteer opportunity.

Volunteers requiring a CRB will not be able to start the new position until the CRB disclosure is received.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the applicant before withdrawing an offer to a Volunteer.

The Association will provide guidance to applicants as to which kind of disclosure (standard or enhanced) is needed in individual cases. (see page 5 for more detailed information)

Note -CRB checks are conducted every 2 years. Therefore Volunteers will be notified when a new disclosure is required.

Expenses

Any travel costs will be reimbursed, provided that receipts are supplied. Mileage rates for the use of the Volunteers own car will be in line with those used for all Staff, and will be paid on receipt of a completed travel expenses form, signed by the volunteers' supervisor.

Other out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed on production of receipts and subject to the agreement of the Volunteers Supervisor.

Induction and training

St Vincent's Housing Association will provide a thorough induction covering the work of the Association, its staff, working practices and procedures and the area of work the volunteer will be undertaking.

The Volunteer will be asked to sign an agreement, which is NOT a contract, but forms part of the process of managing volunteers effectively.

Optional In house training will be made available to Volunteers where possible and applicable.

Volunteers will be invited to all the Associations Staff Events/Conferences or other appropriate training days.

Support and Supervision

All Volunteers will have a named person within the Association as their main point of contact. A Supervisor will manage day to day support and training.



Opportunities for feed back on progress, discussion of future developments and to air any problems or issues, will be held on a regular basis.

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters of concern at any time, either through their Supervisor or other point of contact. We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage, grievance procedures can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteering is not a substitute for paid employment. The work of Volunteers will be that of a supportive, complementary nature alongside paid staff.

Insurance

All Volunteers are covered by the Associations Insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on the Associations behalf.

Health & Safety

The Association will provide training and feedback in support of our Health & Safety Policy, a copy of which can be found on page 18 of this handbook.

Conduct

In the interests and safety of all staff, volunteers and clients, we expect volunteers to work according to our policies and procedures. In the event of a volunteer acting in any way which might be considered misconduct, this will be dealt with in the most appropriate way.

Confidentiality

St Vincent's Housing Association undertakes to respect all information of a confidential nature and requires all employees and volunteers of the Association to act in a responsible manner in dealing with confidential matters.

Any information held by the Association regarding Volunteers will be treated as confidential.

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff, as outlined in the Confidentiality Policy to be found in the Volunteer Handbook.



Further information for Volunteers requiring Criminal Record Checks

The Association uses the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to assess an applicant's suitability for positions of trust. St Vincent's fully complies with the CRB Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly on the basis of conviction or other information revealed. A policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is available if applicable.

St Vincent's is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or other users of its services regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, religious belief, disability, appearance, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or offending background.

We actively promote equality of opportunity for all and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates. We select candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

A disclosure is only requested after a risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a disclosure is required, guidance will be provided. This will include a statement that a disclosure will be requested in the event of an individual being offered a position. There is no cost to the applicant for this requirement.

The primary purpose of the Criminal Records Bureau is to help organisations make safer recruitment decisions and appointments. This applies to Volunteers in the same way as it would for paid staff.

By providing access to criminal records and other information, the CRB will enable organisations to identify those who may be unsuitable for certain work and positions, especially when the work involves contact with children or vulnerable adults.

The CRB issues two levels of Disclosure: Standard and Enhanced.

Enhanced disclosures are for posts which involve a far greater degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults. In general, the type of work will involve regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of such people. Examples include a teacher, scout or guide leader.

An Enhanced disclosure includes a check on 'unspent' convictions, spent convictions including cautions, reprimands or final warnings and a check on local police records.

We will make every applicant subject to a CRB disclosure aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.



Volunteers will not be able to start their new position until the CRB disclosure has been received.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the applicant before withdrawing an offer to a Volunteer.

Note - CRB checks are conducted every 2 years. Therefore Volunteers will be notified when a new disclosure is required.