

# Volunteers Policy

Policy Number: 25

Version Number: 09

Document Owner: Teresa Meira - Community Engagement, Volunteering and Co-Production Manager

Signed off by: Jackie Herring - Support & Care Area Manager

<b>Date last reviewed:</b>	July 2024	
<b>Due date for next review:</b>	July 2025	
<b>Policy consultation with:</b>	Director of Care & Support Support & Care Area Manager	
<b>Legal Requirements:</b>		
<b>CQC:</b>	N/A	
<b>Other:</b>	N/A	
<b>Related Policies:</b>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Lone Working Policy
	Data Protection Policy	Complaints Policy
	Safeguarding Policy	Code of Conduct
	Whistleblowing/ Disclosure of Public Interest Policy and Procedure	Volunteer Handbook
<b>Scope:</b>	This Volunteer Policy sets out the broad principles for involving volunteers at Outward. It applies to all volunteers, staff, trustees and people we support.	
<b>Policy Equality Impact Assessed</b>		

Version number	Amendments	Reviewed by	Date

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print. Please contact 0208 980 7101 or email [info@outward.org.uk](mailto:info@outward.org.uk).

## 1. Policy Statement

---

The Volunteer Policy provides guidance on the use and support of volunteers, informing volunteer related roles in Outward, and communicating Outward's procedures and commitment to developing volunteering.

We define volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups. It is essential that volunteering is a choice made freely by each individual.

## 2. Purpose

---

Outward views volunteering as a way to improve the lives of the people we support and add value to services and projects. Volunteers hold a highly valued position in Outward and the commitment to providing high standards of volunteer placements continues.

The benefits of volunteers include enabling greater independence and wider opportunities for the people supported; improving social, emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing; increasing community engagement and choice; bringing fresh ideas, energy, and enthusiasm; as well as providing extra hands and minds. Volunteers bring special skills, experience and a dedicated focus to our cause, and can become strong representatives of Outward in the community.

Our principles for involving volunteers are foundational to this commitment. We value volunteers for the unique contributions they make and recognize them as a valuable asset to both our organization and the community. Volunteers will be properly integrated into the organization and will not replace paid staff. They are entitled to opportunities for learning and self-development. We value diversity in our volunteers and are committed to treating all volunteers equitably and fairly, reaching a wider range of people, increasing our capacity, and better reflecting the varied communities that we represent.

### **3. Responsibilities**

---

#### **3.1. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

Outward upholds a positive policy of equal opportunities and diversity. Upholding fair and equal treatment for all individuals, actively opposing discrimination and prejudice in all forms, ensuring equal access and treatment for all community members.

The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criteria being the individual's willingness and suitability to carry out agreed tasks. We will try, where budgets allow, to make reasonable adjustments for volunteers with disabilities. We aim for our volunteer pool to be reflective of the local community and will reach out to sections of the community if they are under-represented. To assist with this, we will request volunteers to complete a diversity monitoring questionnaire, embed into the volunteer application form.

We ask all volunteers to conduct their volunteer tasks in a non-discriminatory manner, and comply with Outward's 'EDI Policy'.

### **3.2. Insurance/ Health and Safety**

Outward's insurance and 'Health and Safety Policy' covers volunteer activities and liabilities while they are on the premises, or engaged in volunteering on behalf of Outward.

All volunteers must receive a Health and Safety induction, familiarize themselves with Outward's 'Health and Safety Policy' and 'Lone Working Policy', and ensure activities are conducted in a safe and secure environment.

### **3.3. Safeguarding**

Volunteers must comply with Outward's 'Safeguarding Policy'. Relevant safeguarding procedures must be covered during the volunteer's induction and training.

### **3.4. Mutual Expectations**

Volunteering is an exchange relationship, benefiting both parties through 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 or to carry out the tasks provided. Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly, and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what Outward expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of Outward.

Volunteers can expect:

- A clear written role description.
- Not to be expected to carry out tasks for which they are not skilled, supported, or trained.
- To be provided with accurate information about Outward's mission and policies relevant to volunteers.
- Appropriate induction, support, and training.
- To receive regular constructive feedback on their contribution.
- Encouragement to take on more challenging roles when ready or willing to do so.

- Access to all opportunities available for self-development related to their role.
- Freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, marital or parental status.
- To feel respected and valued, to be listened to, and consulted about issues affecting them.
- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of volunteering.
- A safe, healthy volunteering environment and insurance coverage when volunteering.

Outward expects volunteers to:

- Be punctual and reliable.
- Notify the appropriate person, as soon as possible, if they are going to be unavailable or running late.
- Carry out agreed tasks with commitment.
- Abide by Outward's policies, including the 'Volunteer Policy', 'Code of Conduct Policy', 'Complaints and Compliments Policy', 'Data Protection Policy', 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy', 'Health and Safety Policy', 'Safeguarding Policy' and 'Whistleblowing Policy'.
- Respect the confidentiality of information received while engaged in voluntary activities and after the placement has finished.
- Have a non-judgmental approach and treat others with respect and fairness.
- Give and receive constructive feedback.
- Raise any problems or difficulties at the earliest opportunity, with their supervisor.
- Ask for help and support whenever necessary.
- Submit claims for reimbursement of expenses to an authorized member of staff, as agreed, providing relevant receipts to support these claims.
- Take responsibility for their personal belongings while volunteering on or off-site.
- Inform us as soon as possible if they wish to stop volunteering or change role.

### **3.5. Developing Volunteer Roles**

When developing volunteer roles, Outward ensures varied and meaningful roles, opportunities for development, volunteer risk assessments, budget for volunteer expenses, and clear role descriptions outlining tasks, skills, support, and training provided.

### **3.6. Reward and Recognition**

Outward seeks to recognize volunteer's achievements and contributions in various ways. This includes saying thank you in person, mentioning volunteers in documents such as, Strategic Plans, Monitoring Reports, and our Annual Report, recognizing them at staff events and virtual volunteer awards, and celebrating them during Volunteer's Week.

## **4. Procedures**

---

### **4.1. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **4.1.1. Volunteers**

Volunteers and paid staff have different roles and responsibilities. Volunteers add complementary value to existing services and must not be involved in the provision of personal care to the people we support. There are also specific guidelines around medication, lone working, and individual's finances contained in the Volunteer Handbook. Advice on these issues is always available from staff.

Volunteer roles will primarily involve encouraging people to live more independently, access their local community or services, and engage in social activities or opportunities.

Volunteers are expected to be punctual, reliable, carry out agreed tasks; with commitment, abide by policies, maintain confidentiality, be non-judgmental, give and receive constructive feedback, handle personal belongings; responsibly, and seek help when necessary.

All volunteers must have an identified supervisor who is responsible for supporting and guiding their volunteer tasks, and whom the volunteer could contact with any issues.

#### 4.1.2. Volunteering Team

The Volunteering Team is responsible for coordinating volunteer activity across Outward services and central teams, including role advertising, recruitment, matching, placement, setting standards and procedures for induction, training, supervision, and ongoing support and recognition of volunteers.

#### 4.1.3. Service Volunteer Supervisor

Responsible for supporting volunteers through the service induction, shadowing, supervision, and day-to-day development at Outward.

Volunteer Supervisors are responsible for filling out the relevant volunteer documents provided by the volunteering team and update any volunteer risk assessments, whenever needed. Volunteer Supervisors are also responsible for reimbursement of volunteer related expenses, upon receipt. Supervisors should contribute towards volunteer recognition by recognising and nominating excellent contributions to the Volunteer Awards.

The responsibility for the supervision and support of volunteers is shared by the volunteering team and the appointed supervisor, ensuring proper induction, support, supervision, feedback, recognition and safety. We encourage supervisors to have regular informal catch-ups with the volunteer on a monthly basis.

#### 4.2. Recruitment and Selection

Outward follows a recruitment process that includes an application form, informal interviews; when required, role discussions, reference checks, criminal record checks; when necessary, and recruitment of ex-offenders following risk assessment and consideration.

#### 4.2.1. Recruitment

Prospect volunteers will be asked to complete an online application form, where they will be asked a range of questions suited to identify the best match for each position. Volunteers will also need to state their availability for volunteering, provide two references and an emergency contact.

#### 4.2.2. Informal Interviews

Interviews are important because we must take into account the organisation's responsibility to the people we support, as well as ensuring that the role will be valuable to the volunteer. Interviews serve the following purposes:

- For the volunteer to be informed about the project and the tasks they will be doing.
- To establish if the volunteer has the skills or potential skills that would support the project.
- To discuss the volunteer's motivations and expectations and whether they can be met.
- To provide information about what will be expected and the support and training available.

#### 4.2.2. References

Outward requires the receipt of two satisfactory references in order to qualify for a volunteer role. These can be either character (personal) or professional references. We realise that some potential volunteers may not be able to provide two referees, we will consider this on a case by case basis, subject to the needs of the role and project.

#### 4.2.3. Criminal record checks

To safeguard everyone at Outward, we run a Disclosing Barring Service (DBS) check for all volunteers who will be placed in schemes or projects with direct contact to the people we support, or for those who will have access to confidential information. This check is paid for by Outward and has no cost associated to the volunteer.



If the volunteer has a DBS on the updated service, Outward requires the Certificate Number alongside a copy or photograph of the DBS, in order to run a check. If the volunteer does not have a copy or photograph of their DBS registered with the updated service, they will need to apply for a new check under Outward.

#### 4.2.4. Recruitment of ex-offenders

Outward is committed to involving ex-offenders as volunteers wherever possible. We believe that volunteering is an excellent way for ex-offenders to rebuild their lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

A criminal offence will not usually automatically disbar anyone from volunteering, and each applicant's case will be considered individually. However, it is likely that applicants with convictions for serious violent, sexual crimes, fraud or theft will not be considered suitable for roles involving young people at risk, older people or vulnerable adults.

We have a duty to minimise risks to Outward and to protect the people we support. We will consider a number of factors when recruiting ex-offenders as volunteers. These will include:

- The nature and seriousness of their offence(s)
- The relevance of this offence in relation to the volunteering opportunity
- The circumstances under which the offence was committed, and any change to the prospective volunteer's circumstances since the offence(s)
- Any patterns of offending and how recently the offence was committed
- The age at which the offence was committed
- The candidate's attitude towards their offence(s) now

We will conduct a formal risk assessment of the volunteer role, and will weigh up the factors above when making a decision about whether to offer ex-offenders a volunteering role.

Decisions on whether to involve ex-offenders will be made jointly by the volunteering team, the potential volunteer's supervisor and a Director or

Area Manager together, using all available information including application forms, interviews, references, DBS disclosures and risk assessments. If a decision is made not to involve an ex-offender as a volunteer on the grounds of their offending, they will be advised of this by volunteering team. As with all unsuitable candidates, we will aim to support ex-offenders into volunteering elsewhere.

Volunteer should read 'Outward DBS and the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy' for more information.

### 4.3. Induction and Training

All volunteers will receive tailored training related to Health and Social Care and their specific role, alongside an induction into volunteering and the project or service they will be based in.

#### 4.3.1. Volunteer Induction

All volunteers receive an in-house volunteer induction delivered by the Volunteering Team. In this session, volunteers have the opportunity to find out more about Outward, look at different volunteer roles and community engagement activities, answer any questions that they might have and look at key elements of relevant policies and procedures. Please refer to further reading for relevant policies and procedures.

Volunteers are required to book a place in order to attend the session. Sessions are offered both online and in-person. At the end of these sessions, volunteers are asked to fill out an anonymous online feedback form to allow the team to reflect and improve the service provided.

#### 4.3.2. Training

Before starting their role, volunteers are asked to complete a selection of online training modules, varying upon role. Training modules are selected to provide the volunteer with the necessary knowledge needed to start volunteering at Outward.

Additional training may be provided, as needed, for volunteers to carry out their roles effectively and safely.

#### 4.3.3. Service Induction

If volunteering at a scheme, volunteers will complete a Service induction session with staff members, where appropriate training and advice will be provided, as well as information on relevant policies and procedures such as Health & Safety, Safeguarding and emergency procedures. If based at a scheme, volunteers will also meet the people we support and read from their support plans, risk assessment and other important information (on a need to know basis, for the people they are directly volunteering with).

#### 4.3.4. Trial Period

There will be a trial period of up to 4 weeks for each new volunteer. Outward retains the right to end a volunteer placement at any stage, if it is felt the placement is not working or if the person is unsuitable for the volunteering role.

### 4.4. Support and Supervision

Each volunteer has a designated supervisor for day-to-day guidance and advice.

Volunteers receive a copy of the volunteer handbook, are asked to sign a volunteer agreement and show their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of volunteers during their induction. All volunteers must also read and understand Outward's code of conduct.

#### 4.4.1. Health Questionnaire and Risk Assessment

Volunteers are asked by the Volunteering Team to fill out a volunteer health questionnaire to inform the volunteer risk assessment. Volunteers must report any health conditions that Outward should be aware of, in order to draft a tailored and effective risk assessment.

#### 4.4.2. Supervision

The volunteering team will carry regular individual catch-ups with the volunteers to discuss their wellbeing, role, provide and gather feedback, highlight training needs related to the role and check for any health and safety issues. Volunteers should not wait for their catch-ups to raise an issue and should speak to their supervisor or a member of staff, as soon as the issue arises.

One-to-one catch-up meetings take place after the first month, at the end of the third month and every three months after that.

Catch-ups can be conducted over the phone, video call or in person, lasting for approximately 15 minutes.

#### 4.5. Expenses

Outward does not expect volunteers to be 'out of pocket' due to their volunteering activities with Outward and therefore there are circumstances when it is appropriate for a volunteer to receive reimbursement as follows.

##### 4.5.1. Travel expenses

###### 4.5.1.1. To and from Outward

This applies to and from the place of volunteering via the most affordable route that is safe and accessible. Volunteers are required to keep all receipts or a photograph of the oyster card breakdown. For contactless payments, volunteers can register their debit card at Transport for London website and provide Outward with a screenshot of their journey.

###### 4.5.1.2. During volunteering

Any travel undertaken as part of volunteering tasks will be reimbursed from the person receiving support, if they have capacity and consent to do this, or, from petty cash if they do not have capacity, refuse to pay or if the volunteer is providing group support.

Some schemes operate with a pre-paid oyster card that is provided for travel during volunteering hours. If this applies, volunteers will be handed the oyster card by staff before travelling with the people receiving support and should return it to staff upon arrival back at the scheme.

#### 4.5.1.3. Central placements

Some projects might be funded centrally and refunded directly from the volunteering team. In some cases, pre-paid oyster cards might be provided. The volunteers will be asked to sign an oyster card agreement, where they state that the oyster card is property of Outward and should only be used for volunteering related travel, as stated above.

The Volunteering Team manages and has access to the journey history of this card and will top it up on a regular basis instead of refunding travelling expenses. The Oyster card and balance is the sole responsibility of the volunteer during placement, which included any loss.

Any issues with the card should be reported in a reasonable time to the Volunteering Team.

This Oyster card should be returned to the Volunteering Team on the final day of placement or at an agreed time.

#### 4.5.2. Food expenses

If volunteering for more than four hours in a row, at a scheme or project, Outward will offer to reimburse meals up to a maximum of £6.00 per day, upon production of valid receipt. This amount does not stack throughout the week and can only be claimed for the relevant day.

If the volunteer is unable to eat their own lunch, as they are supporting a person on a one-to-one basis on a day trip, the lunch should be paid for by the person they are supporting, if they have capacity and consent to this, or from petty cash, if they do not have capacity or refuse to pay. Meals taken in these circumstances can be claimed up to a maximum of £6.00 per day. Admission fees incurred whilst out with the person should also be reimbursed.

#### 4.5.3. Reimbursement

Reimbursements are made in cash. In order to get reimbursed, volunteers are required to fill out a volunteer expenses form and provide receipts for the expenses incurred. This can be done in person or over email. We accept photos of the original receipts and are unable to reimburse expenses if receipts are missing. Claims must be submitted within one month of the expenditure.

Services must plan ahead and agree with the person being supported, their responsibilities for covering volunteering costs. Staff should ensure this is reimbursed to the volunteer the same day or within a mutually agreed time-frame.

#### 4.6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Through the course of their volunteering activities with Outward volunteers are likely to be made aware of personal and sensitive information about the people we support in order for them to volunteer successfully and safely.

Volunteers must, at all times, respect the need to maintain confidentiality and sensitive information must not be disclosed to anyone outside Outward without permission except where it is required by law, and on a need to know basis.

All volunteers are required to read, and confirm they understand Outward's Data Protection Policy before starting their volunteering activities.

Outward staff will treat volunteer's information in a confidential manner and respect the rights of the volunteer to secure record keeping.

#### 4.7. Reporting Concerns (Whistleblowing)

Whistleblowing is when you report suspected wrongdoing in the place you volunteer. Officially, this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest'.

Volunteers can play an important role in reporting any bad practice they might see and Outward welcomes and will support any volunteer who needs to do this in Outward.

Outward will ensure that volunteers are aware of the whistleblowing policy and this will be covered in the Volunteer handbook.

#### 4.8. Resolving Problems

We aim to treat all volunteers fairly, equitably and consistently. Volunteers are encouraged to raise any problems at the earliest opportunity with their supervisor, so that they may be resolved promptly and informally.

The volunteer's supervisor is initially responsible for handling problems regarding the volunteer's conduct or complaints. They will seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted, and acted upon swiftly with the support of the volunteering team.

#### 4.9. Complaints Procedure

Outward's Complaints Policy is designed to set standards for how we promote the Complaints Procedure, deal with complaints and act upon the feedback we receive from complaints about our services.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that anyone who has a complaint or concerns about our services or service delivery is able to express those concerns and be assured they will be taken seriously.

Most issues that could arise will be resolved through on-going support and supervision but where this is inappropriate, we ask volunteers to seek advice and follow the steps outlined below.

Examples of complaints could be:

- A complaint made by a volunteer about a service or staff member working for Outward
- A complaint made by the people we support about a volunteer

Complaints can be reported either to the service directly (e.g. to your volunteer supervisor or the Volunteering manager), or if this is not appropriate (e.g. if the complaint is about the volunteering service or the scheme), then complaints can be made to Outward's Quality complaints team by emailing [complaints@outward.org.uk](mailto:complaints@outward.org.uk).

All formal complaints would be dealt with in line with Outward's complaints procedure policy. A copy of the Outward Complaints procedure flow chart, with contacts and where to send complaints and how, is attached as an appendix to the Volunteer Handbook.

#### 4.10. Exit Process

##### 4.10.1. End of Placement

Both volunteers and Outward can terminate the placement, preferably with mutual consent, providing notice for cover. Ideally, we request a month's notice, due to the needs of the people we support that require an adaptation phase or the recruitment of a new volunteer.

##### 4.10.2. Exit Questionnaire

Volunteers are asked to fill out an online exit questionnaire to gather feedback. This questionnaire is fundamental to evaluate and further support the implementation of improvements in the volunteering programme.

##### 4.10.3. Reference Request

Outward provides references upon request, to volunteers that complete three months of consistent volunteering or any number of one-off volunteer events. Volunteering experience and feedback are shared through references to support future volunteering or paid opportunities for the volunteer.



## 5. References/ Further Reading

---

- Volunteer Handbook
- Outward Code of Conduct Policy
- Outward Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Outward Data Protection Policy
- Outward DBS and the Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy
- Outward Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Outward Equality and Diversity Policy
- Outward Health and Safety Policy
- Outward Safeguarding Policy
- Outward Whistleblowing Policy

## 6. General Data Protection Regulations Statement

---

Outward is committed to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. It requires all staff and partners to respect confidentiality and data subjects' rights in line with its policies and procedures.

To ensure compliance with the Regulations staff must ensure that any personal information produced or processed as part of these procedures is appropriately filed on SharePoint, Sona, Iplanit, the Outward server or other agreed Password-controlled filing system(s) with role-based access control.

Whilst processing paper documents, including those from third parties, these documents must be stored in secure lockable cabinets. Records will be kept for as long as they are needed to meet the operational needs of Outward, together with legal and regulatory requirements. Where there is a deviation from this principle, the reasons for this must be recorded.

A detailed breakdown of retention and deletion of records can be found in Outward's Record Management and Retention Policy.

When disposing of documents containing personal data this should be done via confidential waste.



Please refer to Outward's Data Protection Policy and Procedure for more information.