



University of Leicester **Student Volunteers**

Volunteer Rights and Policies

Welcome to Contact!

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a volunteer with Contact, there are certain things you can expect, and it's important to let us know if things aren't going as you'd expected them to. There are also some things that Contact expects from all volunteers - mostly these are to make sure that the organisation meets everyone's needs, and that no volunteer feels isolated or unsafe in their activities.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT...

- To receive basic training and ongoing support
- To be paid all out-of-pocket expenses
- To know who you are responsible to
- To know exactly what is being asked of you
- To learn and develop new skills
- Not to be used to replace paid staff
- To be safe whilst volunteering
- To be treated in accordance with the Equal Opportunities policy
- To know when and how long you want to volunteer for
- To leave or change projects
- To be valued
- To complain

WHAT CONTACT EXPECTS OF YOU...

- Respect others and the Equal Opportunities policy
- Report all potential hazards, accidents, near-misses or perceived risks
- Tell someone if you're having any kind of difficulty or problem with your volunteering
- As a representative of Contact to be as polite, patient and considerate as possible
- Never put yourself or others at risk
- Be reliable - it's very important to let people know if you're not going to be able to turn up
- Take part in the democratic processes of Contact
- Make constructive suggestions about how we can improve the work of Contact
- Respect confidentiality
- Support other volunteers

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Contact is committed to a policy of equal opportunities, and works hard to ensure that this policy is a living document. We aim to ensure that all volunteers are able to carry out their activities in an environment free from all forms of discrimination.

If, at *any* time, you experience prejudice or discrimination for *any* reason, please make sure you talk to a member of the Contact Exec or the Volunteering Team about it. Any discussion will be kept confidential, and we will strive to resolve any problems. It's also important to remember that Contact has an extensive support network available to you for any difficulty you experience when volunteering.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Contact Student Volunteers is a student association of the University of Leicester Students' Union. It exists to promote, co-ordinate and support voluntary and community action.

Equal Opportunity Policy Statement

Contact Student Volunteers operates an Equal Opportunity Policy in employment, service provision and development activity. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no job applicant, volunteer, employee, user of services or member is discriminated against because of disability, sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, marital status, responsibility for dependants, sexual orientation, age, trade union activity, political or religious beliefs.

This policy also commits Contact Student Volunteers, its staff, volunteers and Executive to an increased awareness of those ways in which individuals and groups are oppressed and to take action with regard to its own structures, services and development activity to maximise participation by those people whose access to services, information, influence and power is limited for whatever reason. We recognise that this policy will be in a continual state of development as the awareness of the organisation grows and grows.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Contact's Confidentiality Statement

Contact requires its staff and volunteers to maintain a high standard of confidentiality at all times. However if the confidant is a child or vulnerable adult and he or she has disclosed information regarding abuse, the volunteer is obligated under the Children's Act, 1989 to pass this information on to the appropriate professional.

Confidentiality Information

As a Contact volunteer you may have direct access to service users and their information. You will build up relationships with service users based on trust. You will often be seen as being non-authoritative to children and therefore will often be asked to share secrets and confidences.

It is therefore important for you as a volunteer to understand the need for confidentiality in order to build up relationships with service users. However, as mentioned in the confidentiality statement, it is not always appropriate to maintain this confidentiality.

"Gossip" can often be seen as harmless. For example, telling a housemate about something that happened on a project or talking about one of the volunteers or an issue that arose in the office may not seem important, but the consequences may be disastrous if that gossip is repeated. The other person may not be a volunteer and may have little insight into the service provided. You never know who may hear the gossip or how they will be affected. Therefore it is important to maintain confidentiality in most situations.

There are different implications for projects working with different groups. For example, the issues around children are quite involved: the Children's Act, 1989 specifies that the child must be protected from harm whereas an adult is treated differently, and can maintain the right to tell a volunteer something in total confidence without any action being taken. It is in this situation that you may need the support of the Volunteering Team and Executive. Again, feel free to have a chat with any of us at any time regarding these issues. As a volunteer you are not responsible for resolving clients' problems, simply providing a listening ear and a referral aid if necessary may encourage a client to help themselves.

Please read the Code of Practice for working with children for further information.

Code of Practice for Working with Children

Volunteers are really important to children, and you've made a great decision to get involved in one of our projects involving children. This is a brief guideline for good practice when working with children, to keep both volunteers and children safe.

Please read this Code of Practice and keep it for future reference. If you have any queries or questions, please don't hesitate to ask a member of the Volunteering Team or one of the Executive.

Criminal Record Bureau Checks (CRB checks)

Volunteers working with vulnerable adults or children will be asked to complete a CRB check. You will need to fill in the form and provide 3 forms of identification and proof of address. It can sometimes take a few weeks to receive a response, but in most cases volunteers will be able to get started on the initial training and induction of their chosen project and even volunteer under supervision.

Having a criminal record does not necessarily mean that you cannot volunteer - it depends very much on the nature of the incident and the type of volunteer work you are interested in.

Remember, a CRB check is just another way of protecting our volunteers, the Association and the vulnerable individuals with whom we often work.

Children's Rights

All children have needs and rights, and as a volunteer you should recognise and respect these:

- The need for physical care and attention
- The need for intellectual stimulation
- The need for emotional love and security
- The need for social contact and relationships
- The right to have their needs met and safeguarded
- The right to be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation
- The right to be protected from discrimination
- The right to be treated as an individual.

Contact and volunteers working for Contact should take positive action to eliminate discrimination against any person or group of people. Volunteers should ensure that children are protected from discrimination on any grounds, including ability, and challenge discriminating comments and behaviour. Activities should be designed to include all children and to promote positive attitudes towards differences.

All children are individuals and should be valued equally.

Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Children

These guidelines are as much for the protection of volunteers as for children. Make sure that these are adhered to and then your actions can never be misinterpreted.

- **Never allow yourself to be left alone with a child.**
- Be clear about what the objectives of the lesson/activity are before it begins.
- Always refer any problems to the teacher/project co-ordinator.
- Never contradict an instruction given by a teacher/ project co-ordinator or other member of staff.
- Never use physical force against a child, except when to protect another person. If it is necessary to restrain a child because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others, then the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time. The incident should be recorded in writing, with a witness statement, immediately afterwards. If you are in any doubt as to how to restrain a child safely, then ask the project co-ordinator.
- Conduct yourself in a manner that sets a good example to the children.
- Always give one day's notice if you are unable to attend a session.
- Never make physical contact with a child without their consent. Be cautious about physical contact in games or in 'cuddles'.
- First aid given should be recorded in writing and reported to the parent.
- Challenge any unknown adult who enters the project.
- Never leave a child unsupervised.

IMPORTANT

If you believe a child is being abused, you are legally obligated to pass this information on under the 1989 Children's Act. Please discuss any concerns with the Project Co-ordinator. You will not be made responsible for any further action.

If you are concerned about the behaviour of a volunteer, consult the Project Co-ordinator, Contact Exec or a member of the Volunteering Team. We all need guidance, and we all make mistakes sometimes. **Please read the section entitled "Disclosure" for more information.**

Challenging Behaviour

'Bad' behaviour is often a response to a situation, or a way to seek attention. If children are occupied, there will be less of a need to seek attention and less of a chance for boredom to set in.

The following guidelines can be used to deal with challenging behaviour constructively:

- Be aware of what unacceptable behaviour is. Ask your Project Co-ordinator if you are unsure.
- Explain to children why certain behaviour is unacceptable. This makes children feel responsible for their behaviour and they are less likely to repeat it.
- Make sure it is the behaviour which is punished and not the person. Always avoid labelling someone as 'bad'.
- If appropriate, ignore the bad behaviour for a while - they may only be attention seeking.
- Always maintain your own standards of behaviour - therefore acting as a role model.
- Respect children's rights.
- Remain calm and get the attention and support of other volunteers or the Project Co-ordinator.

It is not your job to punish or reprimand children, but to help them have fun.

Play

Play is an important medium through which children learn and develop socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally.

- Games and toys should be carefully chosen for the age and ability of the children with whom you work.
- There should be a variety so that the children are given choices.
- Children should be allowed to play at their own pace.
- Children who do not wish to join in should be given the choice not to.
- Activities should reflect the diversity of society and involve all children.
- Volunteers should join in!

Above all, remember that volunteering is fun and playing games is fun. Working with children is enjoyable and extremely rewarding. Without you, children's projects could not go ahead and the children would not get the care and attention that you can give them.

Disclosure

It is possible (although unlikely) that a child may confide in you an allegation of abuse. It is crucial that you respond appropriately to this. In such a situation it is suggested that you use the following guidelines:

- **Take time to listen to the child:** they have placed their trust in you. Reassure them that it is okay to be telling you this.
- **Record what has been said in writing.** Pass it on to the appropriate authority.
- **Do not interrogate the child:** it is not your responsibility to find out more but simply to pass on what you know. Questioning the child may affect how the child's disclosure is received at a later date.
- **Do not over-react.** It is extremely unlikely that the child is in immediate danger.
- **Do not make promises you are unable to keep,** such as keeping secrets and promising not to tell. It is your role as a play-worker to report instances of child abuse.
- **Do not gossip about what you have been told.** This is a child and its family - speak only to the Project Co-ordinator and other appropriate people.

It is the duty of anyone who works with children to report disclosure of child abuse.

Social services will work with the whole family to try and keep them together. It is rare that a child is removed from the home.

If you have any questions or concerns about disclosure, please contact the Volunteering Team.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is important that all volunteers have a thorough understanding of this Policy and of the commitment required from each individual if the Policy is to be effective.

Health and Safety Code of Practice

Contact Student Volunteers considers that the health and safety of its employees and volunteers for whom it arranges opportunities is of prime importance.

Implementation

Contact will:

- Ensure that Leicester University Students' Union maintains insurance policies to cover its public liability, employees and volunteers in all work locations.
- Keep itself informed about changes to health and safety legislation.
- Give a positive lead in promoting healthy and safe working environments and practices.
- Follow Approved Codes of Practice in meeting Health and Safety legislation.
- Ensure that any community organisations that we refer volunteers to, have been subject to our health and safety checks. This includes ensuring policies are in place to safeguard volunteers.

Contact & Student-led Projects

Volunteers will be given induction about health and safety and the necessary information, instruction and training to ensure the safe performance of work activities. Induction will give clear guidance about what and volunteers can do to meet their responsibilities for their own health and safety.

Risk assessments will be carried out, if necessary, before volunteers commence their activities.

Project Leaders will check that recommended actions to remove or minimise risks are implemented before volunteering takes place where risks have been identified.

An accident report form will be issued to Project Leaders, for the recording of accidents.

Supervision by persons selected by Contact, will be available where there are assessed risks.

Employees and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Work safely and with due regard for the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others.
- Report to Contact:
 - 1) Accidents and incidents that may lead to injuries
 - 2) All unsafe or unhealthy conditions that may arise

Adhere to health and safety rules and regulations made both in relation to and in regard to particular work or procedures.

Comply with statutory obligations and with the requirements of all relevant Codes of Practice.

Attend appropriate Health and Safety training where offered.

Complaints

We hope you never have cause of complaint in your volunteering with Contact. Whilst it will be possible to resolve many complaints at an informal level, it may be necessary to deal with some complaints formally. If Contact is aware of any problems there will be further opportunity to prevent their occurrence in the future and to improve the quality of service offered. Contact promises to deal with complaints as quickly as possible and to keep the complainant informed about the progress of the Complaint.

Procedure

- 1) If the complaint is in relation to a volunteering placement with a community organisation, volunteers should approach the organisations' Volunteer Co-ordinator or their designated support person. However, if a volunteer feels uncomfortable doing this, they should contact a member of the Volunteering Team.
- 2) Where possible complaints should be dealt with informally. The complainant should inform the Volunteering Team of the nature of their complaint and ask for the issue to be investigated and resolved. This may be done verbally or in writing
- 3) The Volunteering Team will investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve the situation within 2 weeks.

Volunteer Expenses Policy

It is reasonable to assume that during a volunteering activity/project, expenses by the student volunteer(s) may be incurred.

Contact is committed to reimbursing student volunteers for reasonable expenses in accordance with the following policy guidelines:

Contact led projects

- Contact Student Volunteers will only reimburse volunteer expenses for 'Contact led projects' that take place in Leicester and Leicestershire, with prior agreement.
- If the volunteer's own car is used for travel, mileage will be repaid at 35 pence per mile for activities that take place in Leicester and Leicestershire. Mileage should be recorded to enable repayment. If mileage is not recorded, start and finish locations will be used to estimate mileage using the AA route planner. Prior agreement will need to have been made.

Restrictions and exceptions:

- The volunteer must prove that the cheapest form of travel available was used (e.g. if travel was by train, the ticket should be a standard or a cheap day return, not a first class ticket).
- If the location of the volunteering opportunity is within 1 mile from university campus, volunteers are expected to travel by foot.
- Taxi fares will not be reimbursed unless by prior agreement.

Volunteering with Community organisations

Expenses for volunteering activities with community organisations will need to be agreed directly with the organisation(s) providing the volunteering opportunity. Claims should be made directly to the organisation(s).

If the volunteer is unsure who to make a claim with, in the first instance, they should make expenses claims directly to the organisation. If expenses cannot be reimbursed by the organisation offering the volunteering opportunity, then volunteers should refer to Contact Student Volunteers by e-mailing:

contact@le.ac.uk

How to claim your expenses

Claims can be made by e-mailing contact@le.ac.uk in the first instance; claims will then be passed to the Contact Treasurer. Volunteers will be asked

to complete an expenses form and attach any receipt(s). Contact Student Volunteers will endeavour to refund student expenses as soon as possible; however delays can be expected during university holidays.

FOR ALL EXPENSE CLAIMS, RECEIPTS SHOULD BE PROVIDED.