

## Volunteer Development Policy

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### Involving Volunteers in LGEC

This volunteering policy aims to set a framework, which enables LGEC to work **effectively** with volunteers. Using volunteers makes our organisation more in touch with the people that it serves, brings a different perspective to our work and helps us represent a range of views and experiences. It is important to us that volunteers are involved in the running of the organisation, and will therefore be encouraged to take part in decision making processes and planning where possible.

Volunteering is about creating & sustaining relationships rather than performing tasks. It is essential that adequate time and consideration is given to developing a system of working with volunteers, and ensure that project planning includes volunteer involvement.

There are many people who already participate in LGEC projects on a voluntary basis, as members of community groups, organisational partners and as individuals. We recognise that they make an invaluable contribution promoting the objectives of LGEC. Project participants, who wish to engage in further voluntary activity on behalf of LGEC, can negotiate 'informal' arrangements with project workers. If appropriate, they may then be taken on as 'formal' volunteers through the processes outlined below.

Volunteers may be assigned to one team or project worker to support a particular project or work activity. The staff member responsible for allocating & supervising a volunteer's work will also have primary responsibility for delivering training necessary to complete assigned tasks. Additional support from a Volunteer Co-ordinator may be required for other support or training needs.

It will be the role of a Volunteer Co-ordinator:

- To liaise with staff to identify organisational & project needs for volunteers
- To help staff create meaningful & significant jobs
- To match volunteers' skills & experience to meet organisational & project needs
- To recruit, interview & induct volunteers
- To ensure all volunteers are given adequate support & supervision

- To undertake regular assessments of volunteer skills & needs to ensure that they are being met
- To provide support & identify any training needs for staff that may be supervising volunteers.
- To develop a system of recognition for volunteer achievement & contribution.

## **Diversity**

LGEC aims to actively involve volunteers & management committee members from a wide range of social & cultural lifestyles. Welcoming diversity in this way can help challenge prejudice and difference, bring new perspectives on the way we work and better reflect the diverse individuals and groups in Lancashire.

Diversity is far more than an Equal Opportunities policy as it also includes wider groups & identities that we all belong to. LGEC will endeavour to ensure that it's actions, culture, structures, policies & procedures encourage equality and do not discriminate against any one individual or group.

We will specifically seek advice from agencies that work with people from minority ethnic groups and with disabilities to ensure that our recruitment messages effectively reach people in these groups.

## **Volunteers' Responsibility**

Volunteers, like paid staff, are expected to help as reasonably requested with additional tasks to their main role to maintain the smooth running of LGEC. These may include:

- Staffing the reception desk and dealing with enquiries
- Photocopying
- Mailing newsletters
- Keeping work areas tidy and welcoming
- Contributing to newsletters and internal bulletins
- Observe LGEC policies & procedures
- Being involved in the planning & development of LGEC
- Supporting events and activities

All volunteers are asked to complete time logs of hours worked. These are important as we can use donated time as 'match funding' for project income. It is important that volunteers stick to agreed days & times of work and inform us if times vary or are unable to work. This will help us ensure that there is space and support available for volunteers to be able to work effectively.

Volunteers will be expected to attend regular meetings with their supervisor and volunteer coordinator. These will provide an opportunity to discuss work, review progress and identify any training needs.

## **Role Descriptions**

Each volunteer, as with paid staff, will be issued with a role description. This will contain a clear description of the duties and responsibilities of their work. It will be reviewed and updated annually, or as necessary if the work duties change significantly.

## **Keeping Records**

All personal volunteer details will remain confidential and kept in a secure place. The following information will be recorded for each volunteer:

- Name, Address & Contact number (plus an emergency contact)
- Application form & equal opportunities monitoring form\*
- References
- Time logs\*
- Expenses claims\*
- Support & supervision notes
- Details of any training received\*
- Other correspondence between LGEC and the volunteer

\*This information may be used for LGEC monitoring & evaluation purposes.

## **Expenses**

Volunteers are entitled to claim travel expenses up to a maximum of £5.00 per day. There is also a subsistence allowance of £2.50 for volunteers working at least 5 hours in one day (not including a lunch break). If volunteers incur expenses on behalf of LGEC these will be reimbursed, subject to approval by their supervisor. Expenses forms are obtainable from the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

All receipts must be attached to an expenses form. The expenses form must be given to the finance worker by the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month. Expenses are usually payable by cheque on the 19<sup>th</sup> of each month. If this presents a problem, alternative arrangements may be possible.

No other expenses or benefits in kind are payable to volunteers.

## **LGEC Membership**

Volunteers are automatically LGEC members for such time as they remain volunteers and may borrow items from the library under the normal library conditions. The membership fee is waived, although if anyone wishes to further support LGEC's work by paying the membership fee this is of course accepted.

## Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers can be a difficult and time-consuming exercise if not done effectively. Adequate preparation is essential to ensure that our volunteering needs are identified and the right volunteers are recruited to meet those needs. To do this, we need:

- To know what job(s) we are recruiting for.
- To be clear what type of person we want (i.e. skills, values & interests)
- An understanding of the motivational needs of someone who may want to do that job. The best people to ask about this are, existing volunteers & management committee members.
- A Volunteer Request form must be completed by the project worker/supervisor.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator can help produce and communicate this information to relevant people. Our volunteer recruitment message needs to be clear and consistent, ideally disseminated through our existing network of community groups, members & partners. By far, the most effective method of recruiting volunteers is by talking directly to people at public events, workshops & meetings.

With any recruitment message, potential volunteers need to know:

- What it is that we do, what problem(s) we address, why we are here?
- How they can help solve that problem doing this particular job?
- How they will be supported/trained to do this job, what challenges they may face?
- What benefits they will get, how volunteering will meet their motivational need?

For each volunteer role that arises, the Volunteer Co-ordinator will circulate details to staff, volunteers & management committee members who could inform other people they work with.

## Selection

All potential volunteers must complete an application form and provide details of two referees. The application form will also ask for information about interests, work experience (paid & unpaid), availability and reasons for volunteering. If an applicant looks likely to fit a post, an interview will be set up with the Volunteer Co-ordinator and possibly the project supervisor.

The interview should be arranged at a time convenient for the potential volunteer and questions aimed to find out further if the person is suitable for the post. In the event that they are unsuitable, an alternative volunteer post may be offered to the applicant.

Successful applicants will be notified in writing of their induction date.

## Induction Procedure

Inductions are a useful way to prepare volunteers for their new position with LGEC, to make them feel comfortable and provide them with a basic understanding of the workings of the organisation. A volunteer who understands the organisation and knows how they fit in to the process is the best communicator to the public and other potential volunteers. There are three areas to be covered that may be done by different people, although the Volunteer Co-ordinator must ensure that it is carried out:

- **Purpose of LGEC** – why we do what we do, who we work with & LGEC's history
- **Systems & structures** – policies & procedures, organisational structure etc...
- **Culture** – Informal introductions to team members & customs

~~Volunteers will have a probationary period of 3 months~~

## Support & Supervision

Volunteers will be assigned to work with a ~~staff member~~ ~~project worker~~ who will be their direct supervisor. Supervision should occur regularly and may become less frequent as the volunteer becomes more familiar with their role. Good supervision involves planning, empowering and evaluating to ensure that jobs are completed to a high standard.

## Training & Appraisals

Regular appraisals will be carried out by the Volunteer Co-ordinator to identify any training needs or issues with their volunteering role. If for any reason the volunteer feels unhappy in their current post, in certain circumstances it may be possible to change roles within LGEC.

## Grievance & Discipline Procedures

The same policy applies to volunteers as with paid staff. A copy will be provided in the Volunteer Handbook.

## Exit Interviews

Exit interviews will be offered to volunteers who wish to leave the organisation. They provide useful feedback and usually conducted by the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

## Health & Safety

LGEC has the same Health & Safety responsibility for volunteers as it's paid staff. A copy will be provided in the Volunteer Handbook.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation & Review**

Both volunteers and staff will be encouraged to provide feedback about the volunteer policy and practices, through evaluation forms and on-to-one sessions.

This policy will be subject to an evaluation & review at least every two years in consultation with volunteers, staff and management committee members. Feedback can be received at any time with regards to this policy and changes made after appropriate discussion and consideration at Co-ordinating Team or Management Committee meeting.

## **Volunteer Handbook**

Each volunteer will receive a volunteer handbook when they start at LGEC. It shall contain the following information and be updated as necessary:

- Introduction & background to LGEC
- Who's who in the organisation
- Organisational structure
- General Centre Procedures
- Grievance & Discipline Procedures
- Health & Safety Policy
- Role description & Agreement
- Timesheets
- Expenses claim forms