

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Volunteers are people who give freely of their time, skills and enthusiasm, without payment, in order to contribute to the community.
- 1.2 North Tyneside LINK will establish a list of 'active members' who will volunteer to take forward a number of projects aimed at examining aspects of health and social care in North Tyneside and making proposals to improve services. This Policy is intended to apply to all of these 'active members' who become LINK volunteers. LINK recognises the different but equally valuable contribution that volunteers make in complementing the work of paid staff in the Host team.
- 1.3 This policy does not create any form of contract between LINK Volunteers and either the LINK or the Host organisation.

2. Volunteer roles

- 2.1 Much of our work will be undertaken by a series of task groups. Part of each task group will consist of LINK members who can bring wide experience of the issue in question to the group. The LINK members who have this broad knowledge of issues may need to be supplemented by other active LINK members who bring particular and valuable skills to the group. Task groups will be [usually] time limited and will work to a clear remit set by the LINK Board.
- 2.2 Task groups will be expected to take notes of meetings, report progress to the LINK Board and take advice and direction from the Board.
- 2.3 In addition to our growing list of LINK members, who have wide personal knowledge of specific issues or knowledge that relates to specific issues or groups of people, we need to identify LINK members who have the generic skills and/or experience that will enable them to:
 - Lead projects and take responsibility for progressing the work of a team of volunteers
 - Research issues, summarise documents and prepare reports for their task group
 - Design effective interview scripts or questionnaires and support other team members in using these tools either in a face to face setting or by phone
 - Write reports and present them to a range of audiences

- Act as a LINK authorised representative (see code of conduct)
- Carry out the 'enter and view' function

2.4 Task Group members will also need to demonstrate:

- Effective interpersonal skills including listening, observing, explaining, questioning
- The ability to work as a team

2.5 LINK will also recruit other volunteers who can make effective presentations to groups and individuals who may be interested in joining the LINK or could help the host staff to facilitate events.

3. Selection

3.1 Volunteers will be selected against a set of skills and competences, approved by the LINK Board, that are relevant to their proposed role.

3.2 A meeting will be held with the LINK host team to assess the skills and competences that the volunteer can bring, the support they will need, and the contribution they can make to the work of the LINK. This meeting will also give the prospective volunteer the opportunity to assess if they wish to proceed with their application.

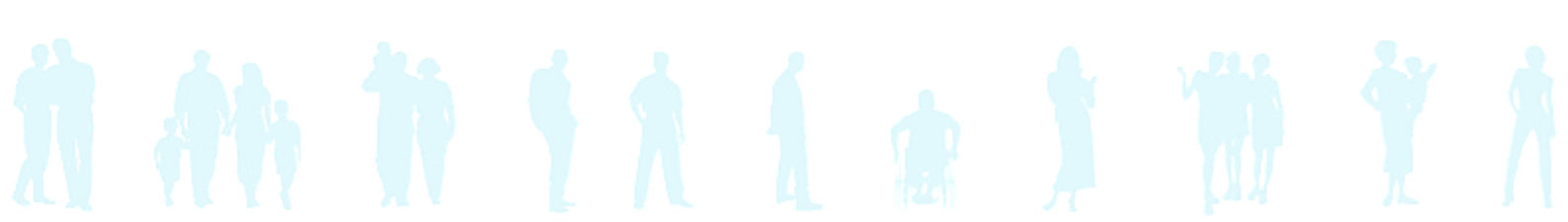
3.3 LINK will seek two independent references for each volunteer. Where appropriate a CRB disclosure will also be undertaken.

4. Expenses

4.1 LINK will reimburse reasonable expenses incurred whilst working as a LINK volunteer. Expenses must be agreed with the LINK manager prior to the expense being incurred.

4.2 Travel Expenses:

- Train Fares will normally be booked through the LINK host who will get the best fare available. This will be arranged with the agreement of the person travelling if bookings are restricted to particular trains. Volunteers and staff are expected to take advantage of railcards if applicable
- Bus Fares will be reimbursed when travel passes are not available
- Use of a taxi must be agreed by the LINK manager prior to any journey being undertaken. Taxis will only be agreed if other forms of transport are not appropriate or available
- Mileage will be paid at the upper non-taxable rate. We will pay mileage or public transport for journeys within Tyne and Wear but if longer distance journeys are undertaken we will normally pay the standard class rail and bus fares



4.3 Subsistence

- Overnight Hotels and evening meals will be reimbursed with prior agreement with the LINK manager for LINK approved activity.
- If a LINK volunteers stays overnight with a friend in order to attend a LINK approved activity, LINK can arrange a payment to contribute towards this (£10 limit) with prior agreement from the LINK manager.

4.4 Link to inclusion policy

Our inclusion policy notes that “Carers of children or those with a disability or illness often find it difficult to attend meetings or events due to their caring responsibilities. The LINK will take advice from carer support organisations to ensure that information on the LINK reaches carers in North Tyneside, and will support those carers who wish to be more involved.” It also notes that “Those who experience socio-economic disadvantage may find it difficult to take part in LINK activities due to travel, caring and other expenses. LINK will support people to be involved by holding engagement events at different venues around the Borough”. In both cases LINK is committed to helping with transport and caring costs where appropriate.

4.5 Expenses will not normally be paid for attending public meetings.

4.6 The Board will delegate decision making, in respect of expenses, to the LINK Manager subject to the right of members to raise issues of concern directly with the Chair of the LINK Board.

5. Training and support/supervision

5.1 We believe that an investment should be made in our volunteers in terms of their personal development. To this end we will offer regular and on-going support, supervision and training to enable volunteers to enhance their volunteering activities with us and their opportunities in the wider community.

5.2 At any time the volunteer can choose to leave the organisation. Similarly LINK can end the volunteer’s role at their discretion.

5.3 Volunteers will have effective training, supervision and support to encourage their interest and motivation. This will include:-

- Advice and information about their role.
- Support and understanding for any problems, concerns or difficulties which they may encounter.
- Ongoing review of their role
- Training, where appropriate.
- Opportunities for self development in line with their volunteering role.

5.4 All LINK volunteers are expected to abide by the LINK Members Code of conduct.



6. Equal opportunities

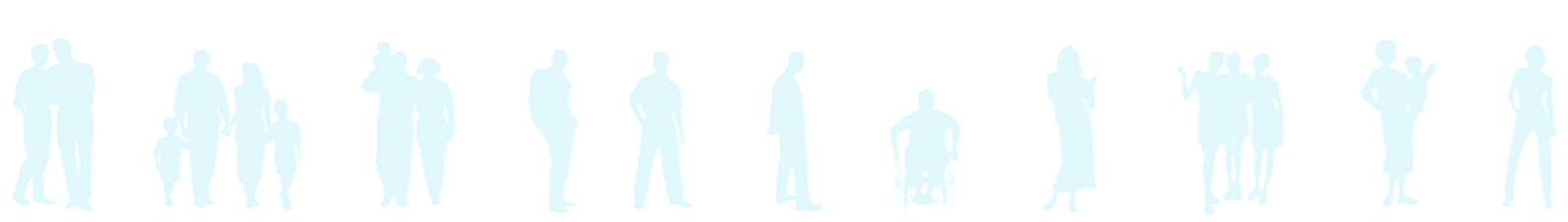
All LINK members and volunteers are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in accordance with the LINK Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.1 LINK is committed to ensuring that volunteers will:-

- Be protected from exploitation by paid workers or any service users and have a meaningful role in the organisation. Volunteering will enhance the work of the LINK but does not act as a substitute to paid work
- Be given adequate information about the tasks they undertake and to play a part in deciding these
- Be given accurate information about LINK and its volunteering policy and have a safe volunteering environment with adequate Health and Safety information and insurance
- Have the opportunity for self development in their volunteering role, through training, support and supervision
- Have a named person they can go to for advice and support and to know who they are accountable to and receive regular constructive feedback on their volunteering
- Be able to say no without feeling guilty
- Have reasonable out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed
- Be treated with respect and without discrimination
- Be given the opportunity to join a trade union
- Have the right to complain

6.2 LINK expects that volunteers will:

- Attend relevant meetings and be reliable and punctual and notify a member of staff at LINK as soon as possible if they are not available
- Play an active part in the work of the group and be prepared to do delegated work to an agreed timetable but negotiate and undertake a manageable and reasonable commitment within their capacity
- Work with colleagues from a range of backgrounds and respect the rights of people with whom they come in contact
- Deal with sensitive information on a confidential basis and work within the policies and procedures of the LINK
- Work towards fair and equal practices
- Ask for support when and where it is needed and carry out only agreed tasks
- Exchange information and give feedback to the member of staff supporting them
- Undertake relevant training where necessary
- Be open to change and request support to deal with change if necessary
- Follow appropriate LINK and Host policies

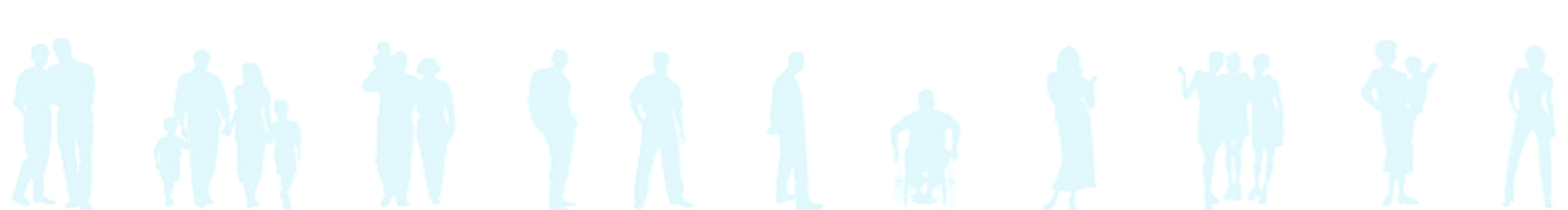


7. Insurance

- 7.1 All volunteers are covered by the Hosts Organisation's insurance policy whilst they are undertaking voluntary activity for or on behalf of LINK.
- 7.2 Volunteers are covered by the same level of insurance as the LINK host paid staff for the role that they undertake. Volunteers, who use their own car for LINK business, should be made aware that it is their own responsibility to make sure they are adequately insured for the tasks they do for LINK. LINK may cover the cost of any additional premium incurred due to volunteering.

8. Concerns

- 8.1 Wherever possible concerns will be resolved through informal means and volunteers should be encouraged to raise any concerns they may have with the named supervisor or LINK Manager. Volunteers should also use support and supervision sessions to discuss any concerns they may have and possible solutions.
- 8.2 The procedure set out below should only be used as a last resort. Although formal, it provides a fair and balanced framework to deal with a volunteer's concern if this has not already been resolved. It should be noted that at each stage of this procedure discussions should be encouraged in order to resolve the matter informally at any point.
1. The volunteer should approach the named supervisor with their complaint in writing. If the complaint is against the named supervisor then the volunteer should approach the LINK Manager.
 2. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage a further meeting should be arranged with the Host CEO.
 3. If no solution is reached within a period of 21 days then either party has the right to take the complaint to a meeting held with the LINK Chair.
 4. The decision made by the LINK Chair shall be final and binding. All parties concerned shall be informed of the decision.
 5. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied at each stage of the process by a person of their choice.
 6. The proceedings will be recorded at each stage. All information discussed will be kept confidential.
- 8.3 It is LINK's aim to ensure high standards of conduct and performance in all aspects of its work. Whilst recognising that complaints can be made against volunteers, it is acknowledged that this can be a sensitive process for a volunteer. Respect will be shown for the feelings of both parties.
- 8.4 Where concerns around a volunteer's activity or conduct are of a serious nature the following procedure will be followed.



1. An official complaint will be dealt with by the LINK manager who will interview both parties, record the facts and reach a decision.
2. Should a complaint be unfounded the LINK manager will inform both parties of the decision and provide the volunteer with the necessary support.
3. Where a complaint against the volunteer is upheld the LINK manager will discuss possible solutions with the volunteer. This may include further training and support or the reassignment of the volunteer to a new role.
4. Where a complaint is upheld and is of a serious nature the volunteer will be asked to leave the LINK immediately. Examples may include sexual offences, physical assault, dishonesty, theft, racist activity, serious breach of LINK policies and procedures, falsification of records. This list is not exhaustive.
5. Where appropriate, the volunteer will be given information of other organisations who could offer support or alternative volunteering opportunities.

9. Review date

This policy will be reviewed in June 2012

LINK Manager
June 2011

