



# Volunteer Policy

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## 1 OVERVIEW

This is Lifespace's Volunteer Policy. We believe that volunteers are vital to the organisation and to our connection with local communities. A big part of the volunteer role at Lifespace is supporting young people with a good understanding of local issues. Volunteers, employees, freelance workers and the Board of Trustees work in partnership to achieve the organisation's objectives.

For further information, please contact the Volunteer Lead, CEO or visit [What is volunteering? | NCVO](#).

### 1.1 DEFINITIONS

A volunteer is someone who spends time doing any non-compulsory, unpaid activity which is of benefit to others. Volunteers (casual or regular) shall not be considered employees of Lifespace, neither will they be required to take on responsibilities which should only be given to paid members of staff.

Volunteers will be required to undertake duties in a range of areas to assist in their personal development. Volunteers are not contracted by Lifespace, and never receive payment for volunteering, be this in kind or monetary. Volunteers will be reimbursed any out-of-pocket expenses incurred through their volunteering activities, such as travel costs.

## 2 STATEMENT OF POLICY

Lifespace welcomes volunteers in mentoring roles within the organisation. We recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make in helping us in our mission and objectives to provide high-quality and high-impact mentoring and youth provision.

Lifespace seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure our services meet the needs of our children and young people.
- Provide new skills and perspectives.
- Increase our contact with the local communities we serve.
- Add value to project outcomes and increase the charity's fundraising capacity.

## 3 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all volunteers and all staff who will be working with volunteers.

Lifespace's Board of Trustees supports the use of volunteers and through its managers will ensure:

- That volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure enabling them to contribute effectively to its work; will not be used to replace and reduce the work of paid employees.
- That paid employees at all levels will work positively with volunteers in line with our *Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy* and, where appropriate, will seek to involve them in their work where capacity allows, and a meaningful role can be developed; and that can lead to personal development. Employees will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing access to relevant training for them to do their work effectively.
- The overall responsibility for volunteers rests with the CEO. However, the day-to-day management rests with designated managers and the Volunteer Lead.
- Lifespace invests in volunteering and its volunteers – and will provide training, support and advice.

## 4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITMENTS

Lifespace aims to be an inclusive organisation, committed to providing equal opportunities including in the recruitment, training and development of employees/volunteers, and in proactively tackling and eliminating discrimination. We are committed to promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work.

Volunteers will receive a copy of Lifespace's Diversity & Equality Policy within our Mentor Handbook and undertake training on this policy as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to have and demonstrate an understanding and commitment to this policy.



## **5 EXPECTATIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Lifespace expects its volunteers to be realistic in their commitment. Volunteer Mentors will commit a minimum of 3hrs per week, during term time, plus training. Once a commitment is made Lifespace expects its volunteers to fulfil this unless arranged otherwise. The role includes record keeping, preparation and routine attendance at supervision. Volunteers will receive an interview and will not start their volunteering role until they have two references and an enhanced DBS check.

Volunteers will be given a full induction on appointment, covering topics such as the history of Lifespace, our current team/project delivery and summaries of our key policies, all of which will be tailored to their volunteer role. Refresher courses will be held where appropriate to coincide with when key policies are updated.

Volunteers will be supervised by the Volunteer Lead or another internal supervisor, who will hold regular check-ins with each volunteer (in accordance with our Supervision Policy) to discuss their role and mentoring delivery.

All employees will be fully informed about the rights and responsibilities of volunteers as part of their own induction and through the approved working practices of Lifespace.

Volunteers are encouraged to represent their views to management on all aspects of our organisation's work through any written or verbal communication, including volunteer meetings and supervision. In all areas not related to conditions of paid employment, volunteers will be covered by all the provisions of other Lifespace policies.

If at all possible, opportunities will be provided for changing and/or upgrading volunteer responsibilities as desired by the volunteer and appropriate to the organisation.

## **6 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND SIGNPOSTING**

Lifespace believes that volunteering should be open to all and welcomes applications from anyone who wishes to volunteer. Once an enquiry is made by a prospective volunteer, they are invited for an initial chat with the Volunteer Lead to discuss their interest and our volunteering opportunities. This will help identify how best their skills, suitability and potential may be matched to an appropriate mentoring setting.

If both parties are happy to proceed, an application form featuring two referees will be completed and an interview will be carried out to outline the volunteer agreement, followed by an induction.

If the prospective volunteer's application fails to meet the criteria of the appropriate Lifespace volunteer post or if no other suitable volunteer vacancy within Lifespace is available at any point during this process, the prospective volunteer will be signposted to the local Volunteer Centre to register for any suitable vacancies with other organisations.

## **7 VOLUNTEER TASKS/ROLE DESCRIPTIONS**

There will be a specified range of tasks that volunteers will be required to undertake. All volunteers will receive a digital Mentor Handbook (reviewed annually) and a Guide for Volunteers. All volunteers will be given clear guidelines and instructions for their tasks volunteering with Lifespace. The Volunteer Lead updates volunteer tasks and role descriptions based on Lifespace needs and feedback from volunteers during supervisions about how to improve and develop their role.

## **8 CONFIDENTIALITY, SECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION**

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff. This states that Lifespace cannot promise confidentiality around what is disclosed in supervision or by a third party, and must consider the safety and wellbeing of all staff and mentees, taking steps to ensure this if necessary. If a safeguarding issue is raised either within supervision or via a third party outside of supervision, this will be addressed according to Lifespace's policies and procedures. Additional support will be provided to any volunteer who is involved in reporting a safeguarding issue. *For more information, see Lifespace's Staff Behaviour "Code of Conduct" and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies.*



As part of their registration with Lifespace, all volunteers will be asked to give consent for Lifespace to contact them with promotional information and to be placed on our mailing list for updates and newsletters. This will allow volunteers to be kept up to date with the latest information about Lifespace and events they can attend and be a part of. This consent will be given on their application form, where they will be asked to sign and check a box to confirm that they agree to these terms. Photography consent for promotional purposes is also requested here.

The information collected on the Volunteer Application Form is digitally stored on Lifespace's secure platform. This information can only be accessed by the Lifespace CEO, Youth Programme Manager and Operations Coordinator. We will review your information with you every two years. If you have not been active as a volunteer for two years, we will remove your information from our files.

In compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation Act (GDPR, 2021), all volunteers will be made aware that they have the right to be removed from our database and mailing list at any time. Volunteers also have the right to request what personal information Lifespace has stored about them and can ask that it is destroyed/deleted at their request. Lifespace can guarantee that all volunteers personal information will not be distributed to any third parties. *For more information on how long we store information for, see Lifespace's Data Protection and GDPR Policy.*

## **9 TRAINING**

Appropriate training for volunteers will be identified through regular 1:1 supervision and in discussion with the Volunteer Lead. These could be training courses offered in-house by Lifespace, online or with an outside provider. Training for volunteers will be offered free of charge.

## **10 EXPENSES**

All volunteers will have their reasonable and properly incurred travel and any other approved expenses reimbursed. Normally, expenses are typically claimed half-termly on the "Expenses Form", which is then paid by BACS.

## **11 INSURANCE**

All volunteers are covered by the insurance policy of Lifespace whilst they are engaged in any work on behalf of Lifespace, provided this is within the boundaries of role descriptions and/or handbooks. Travel to and from volunteering is not covered by Lifespace's insurance policy.

## **12 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

All volunteers are covered by our Health and Safety Policy and will receive a copy of this as part of their induction. The Health & Safety aspect of the volunteer induction focuses on health and safety information specific to volunteer roles and what they need to know if faced with an emergency whilst engaging in volunteering with Lifespace.

In the event of a health emergency such as Covid-19 affecting Lifespace operations, volunteers will be expected to adhere to our procedures stated at the time of the health emergency e.g., wearing face masks and social distancing. Any changes to procedures will be communicated to the volunteer prior to attending any face-to-face project activity. In significant cases (e.g., a pandemic) Volunteers may be asked to sign a written agreement confirming they understand the procedures and their responsibilities prior to any face-to-face activity taking place.

## **13 VOLUNTEERS AND E-SAFETY**

Lifespace encourage staff, volunteers and participants to make appropriate use of technologies. Lifespace is committed to embracing new learning pathways and technologies. Where whole organisation policies and practice require data to be recorded and stored electronically, we will support volunteers to adhere to this.

Lifespace is committed to ensuring that all staff, children and young people within its remit of care will be able to use existing and well as up-and-coming technologies safely.

### **13.1 SOCIAL MEDIA:**

Lifespace uses WhatsApp to keep staff, including volunteers, connected. If volunteers do not agree to their phone number or other personal details to be shared on WhatsApp they can request for this data to not be shared.

As part of Lifespace's Code of Conduct, paid and volunteer staff are required to not engage in any direct contact with children and young people on social media, nor to ask for their personal contact details. If a child or young person asks a volunteer for their personal contact details or social media contacts, volunteers are to decline to share these.



There may be occasion when it is necessary for volunteers to have a way of contacting a young person (e.g., for community mentoring). In such cases, a member of the Core Team will organise the information sharing and the conditions under which it can be used. *For more information, see Lifespace's Code of Conduct Policy.*

### 13.2 ONLINE SESSIONS

Lifespace uses Teams, and on occasion may use Zoom as online video conferencing, to meet with groups or individual young people. These platforms are used when sessions are unable to take place face-to-face or when it is agreed that this may be most appropriate.

Volunteers will only use approved electronic devices for such communication and volunteers must use their Lifespace email address to facilitate the communication.

Lifespace recognises Teams and Zoom are useful tools to communicate and keep participants connected when they cannot meet in person, but guidance must be put in place to safeguard staff, volunteers and participants during these sessions:

- Any young person under 18 must have written consent from a parent/guardian prior to joining an online call.
- If an online session is being recorded or a photograph is being taken during a session, written consent must be provided prior to the recording of the session. Online sessions should be recorded and stored appropriately on the platform used.
- All group members must be reminded of the Lifespace Code of Conduct and ensure everyone is treated equally and with respect.

*For more information on how we support E-Safety with our communities, see the Safeguarding and Child Protection and Staff Behaviour "Code of Conduct" Policies.*

## 14 CHECK-INS AND SUPERVISION

All volunteers will be supervised by the Volunteer Lead or another trained supervisor from within Lifespace. They will agree objectives with the volunteer, recognising positive efforts and offering guidance for strengthening areas of development. In addition to Supervision, the Volunteer Lead will speak with each volunteer at least annually to check in. Volunteers can request more regular check-ins. Informal Lifespace socials will also take place, usually once every term.

Additionally, **ALL** Mentors, including volunteers **MUST** attend regular Supervision to discuss and reflect on their mentoring sessions. These sessions enable Mentors to ensure good practice and offer young people the high-quality, professional service we require.

Note. Failure to attend Supervision sessions would be considered a performance issue and may ultimately result in a termination of the volunteer agreement. *For more information, please see the Supervision Policy.*

## 15 TERMINATION OF VOLUNTEERING

The principle underlying termination of volunteering will depend on the tasks the volunteer undertakes and the individual's continuing fitness to perform the task. The task description will be reviewed at supervision to ensure that both the volunteer's and Lifespace objectives are being met. Should a volunteer have any concerns or issues, then this should be raised in the first instance with their supervisor in accordance with the procedure detailed in their Volunteer Induction pack. Similarly, any complaints or problems associated with an individual will be investigated in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Volunteer Induction pack.

Any volunteer can terminate their role with Lifespace at any time. Whilst there is no obligation for a volunteer to give notice, the charity requests a minimum notice of 4 weeks to allow us time to fill the vacant volunteer role. All properties belonging to Lifespace (e.g. identity pass, resources, written notes about sessions) shall be returned by the volunteer and retained by Lifespace.

Volunteers are asked to attend an exit interview with the Volunteer Lead and/or the CEO at the end of the mentoring relationship with Lifespace.

## 16 RESOLVING PROBLEMS

The relationship between Lifespace and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that Lifespace is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to children and young people, and it is equally important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution.

If the work as a volunteer does not meet with the standards of Lifespace, these steps will be taken:

- An initial meeting with the volunteer and the Volunteer Lead will explain the concerns.
- If this does not resolve the concern, then a meeting with the Volunteer Lead and CEO will be convened.
- If the work still does not meet with the standards, then Lifespace shall have to stop using the volunteer's services.

If there is any dissatisfaction on the part of the volunteer with any aspect of the work, the course of action should be:

- An initial explanation of the dissatisfaction will be given to the Volunteer Lead and/or CEO.
- If that does not resolve the concern, then an informal meeting should be convened with the volunteer.
- If that does not resolve the issue, then a formal meeting with the CEO. (Where it is felt the CEO cannot lead this meeting, a member of the Board would attend).
- If, after this, Lifespace is still unable to resolve the grievance, then it would be inappropriate to continue in the role as a volunteer.

At all times, the volunteer will be free to state his / her case with a friend present if required by the volunteer.

## 17 RELATED LIFESPACE POLICIES

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Staff Behaviour "Code of Conduct"
- Data Protection and GDPR
- Complaints Procedure
- Bullying
- Supervision
- Lone Working
- Whistleblowing
- Safer Recruitment and Selection
- Managing Allegations
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion
- Grievance and Disciplinary

This Policy is communicated to all staff (paid and volunteer) including trustees.

Date of Issue: October 2023	Signed: Alex Lilley	Volunteer Lead
	Signed: Mark Humphries	Chair
Date of Next Review: October 2026		
Policy Owner	Volunteer Lead	