

Volunteer Engagement Policy – Peer Support Plus®



A Peer Support Plus Volunteer is someone who freely commits time, energy and talents to benefit others, while gaining a rewarding experience of working and personal growth, with no expectation of payment except necessary out of pocket expenses.

Volunteers are Peer Support Plus's greatest asset. They deserve to be well trained and nurtured so they give us their best.

We are a small local charity with no reliable source of funds, so we aim to have as few employees and physical assets as possible, and to administer our activities digitally when practical. We rely on our Volunteers and their willingness to help us achieve the Objects stated in our *Constitution*¹.

Volunteers are not employees. This is not a Contract of Employment and nothing stated in this document may be interpreted as intending to form one.

A copy of this *Volunteer Engagement Policy*¹ will be given to all Volunteers when they first engage with Peer Support Plus.

Why Volunteer at Peer Support Plus?

- You will benefit other adults by supporting them to learn how they might better manage their mental health.
- You will be valued, supported and offered opportunities to share your experiences, and to develop transferrable skills.
- You will meet new people and be helped to develop positive relationships with individuals and organisations.
- We recognise that for some people volunteering may be a step along their journey towards recovery. We will try to help you achieve your aims.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The Equality Act 2010 does not apply to those who volunteer.

However, to help us engage with, learn from and benefit all adults everywhere in Leeds, Peer Support Plus is committed to:

- **Equal Opportunities** We aim to treat you without discrimination, especially re: Age; Sex; Sexual Orientation; Gender reassignment; Race; Disability; Religion or belief; Pregnancy and Maternity; Marriage and Civil Partnership.

- **Diversity** We aim to benefit Peers and involve Volunteers from the widest possible range of backgrounds, races, abilities, beliefs, sexual orientations, etc.

Role models

We expect all of our Volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional manner whenever and wherever they represent Peer Support Plus.

We expect all of our Volunteers to model our commitments to Equal Opportunities and Diversity; and to comply with the Law and Peer Support Policies that apply to their role(s) and judgments. If in doubt about the 'right' decision, please ask for help.

Volunteer Facilitators

At all of our Support Groups, Workshops and Courses we will plan to have at least two Facilitators in the 'room', including one who is fully trained and experienced.

We anticipate that Volunteer Facilitators will attend quarterly Facilitator development sessions whenever possible.

We anticipate that experienced Volunteers will Mentor other Volunteers.

We anticipate supporting all our Volunteers with relevant training, mentoring and development, and anticipate Volunteer Facilitators will be willing to volunteer at least 60 hours of their time spread over the first six months, and at least 20 hours every 4 months thereafter.

For examples: Facilitating a weekly Support Group typically requires 2½ hours or a Workshop up to 5 hours; receiving formal Mentoring may take about 1 hour every four months. Other Volunteering activities may include developing and facilitating Workshops or Courses; receiving training; delivering training; Mentoring other Volunteers; Volunteering as a Trustee or as part of our Delivery Team; developing and delivering Plans, Policy and Procedures; Fundraising; administering Peer Support Plus activities and events; etc.

If you are unable to Facilitate when you have committed to do so, we ask that you tell the Delivery Team Lead², your co-Facilitators and the Group as far as possible in advance so that, if necessary, the Delivery Team Lead² can try to find another Facilitator and avoid postponing or cancelling the session.

There may be periods when due to, for examples: illness; change of circumstances; caring responsibilities; holidays; etc. you might wish to take a break from facilitating.

Or you may want to continue to attend your usual Support Group but step back from facilitating it. Please let the Delivery Team Lead² and your co-

Facilitators know as far as possible in advance that you want to take a break so that if necessary, we can try to find another Facilitator.

Other Volunteers

Other volunteering roles may involve more or less of a time commitment (as agreed) than that anticipated from Facilitators.

We anticipate experienced Volunteers will Mentor other Volunteers.

There might be periods when you want to take a break from your volunteering role(s). Please let the Lead for your volunteering role know as far as possible in advance that you want to take a break so that activities can be rearranged/reassigned or a substitute found.

We anticipate that a Volunteer who is also a Peer, while taking a break from volunteering, may wish to continue to engage as a Peer.

After a long break from volunteering

We hope you will want to resume volunteering once that becomes possible for you.

Peer Support Plus would like to welcome you back even after a long absence. Depending on your and our needs at that time, it might be necessary to agree a change of role, and perhaps help you with some refresher training.

Lone working

We will not ask you to work alone (except when working from home).

Insurance

Agreed volunteering activities are covered by Peer Support Plus's Employer and Public Liability Insurance. (But see also 'own Vehicle Insurance' below.)

Intellectual property and copyright

Peer Support Plus Volunteers must accept that the intellectual property and copyright in anything they create or produce for use by Peer Support Plus belongs to Peer Support Plus CIO, unless specifically identified and expressly agreed otherwise in writing in advance.

Self Evaluation

We try to measure the effect Peer Support Plus has on our Peers' mental health using The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS).

We ask every Peer to self-evaluate using WEMWBS when they enter a Peer Relationship with us. We ask all Peers to self-evaluate quarterly at the beginning of March, June, September and December.

Peer Support Plus will never disclose individual self-evaluations but only aggregate them to provide anonymised overall measures of effect.

In the nature of Peer Support Plus, most of our Volunteers are also Peers. If you are a Volunteer who is not a Peer, we won't ask you to self-evaluate but your mental health may change while engaged as a Volunteer. You are welcome to complete the *Self Evaluation*¹ form from time to time and use it to self-assess changes in your mental health which you may wish to discuss with your Mentor (see **Training and Mentoring** below).

Volunteer Expenses

If you are in any doubt about Peer Support Plus's willingness to reimburse expenditure, please enquire of our Treasurer³ and receive written confirmation before incurring any expense.

Travel

You should obtain prior agreement from the activity Lead before incurring travel expenses.

You may claim reimbursement of actual out of pocket expenses incurred on travel by public transport to a venue you attended on behalf of Peer Support Plus. Receipts should be produced. The means of travel should be the most cost-effective convenient method of reaching the venue. For instance, if travel is by Bus or Train the most we will reimburse is the cost of a travel card (if this is cheaper than the available fare).

The cost of a taxi will be reimbursed only if considered necessary and agreed in advance.

If you are unable to use public transport due to disability, alternative transport arrangements must be agreed in advance with our Delivery Team Lead². The alternative agreed will be considered a 'reasonable adjustment' that Peer Support Plus will accommodate.

If there is no practical means of travel by public transport, or it is cheaper to travel by private vehicle, then a Volunteer may claim reimbursement of mileage at no more than the rates set by HM Revenue and Customs:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-travel-mileage-and-fuel-allowances/travel-mileage-and-fuel-rates-and-allowances>

You, your vehicle and any passengers you carry are not insured by Peer Support Plus while you are travelling as a Peer Support Plus Volunteer. Before using your vehicle for volunteering, you must ensure that your own Vehicle Insurance Policy indemnifies Peer Support Plus to third party claims. (Most policies cover this but some insurers may demand an additional premium which Peer Support Plus will not reimburse). If your Volunteer Role Description necessarily involves the use of your own vehicle, you must supply our Treasurer³ with digital or paper copies of your current Driving Licence and Vehicle Insurance Certificate to demonstrate the necessary cover is in place.

When Peer Support Plus funding position allows, we aim to pay expenses to a maximum of two Facilitators each session. We do not have sufficient funds to reimburse travel claims if Facilitators primarily attend for their own benefit, for examples: you co-Facilitate a regular Support Group you primarily attend as a Peer to maintain your own wellbeing; or you co-Facilitate Workshops, Courses or other training you attend primarily for your own wellbeing even though you have volunteered to co-Facilitate. If our shortage of funds would prevent you from volunteering as a Facilitator when you would primarily attend for your own benefit, please discuss this with our Delivery Team Lead².

Meals

If you are Volunteering in person for more than 5 hours in one day you may claim up to £3 towards a meal, on production of receipts.

Claims for reimbursement

All claims should be made using *Expenses Claim Form*¹ signed by the Volunteer, stating the reason for the Travel, or the Meal, or Other agreement with the Delivery Team Lead², and having receipts attached (including Tickets for Public Transport). Claims for travel by bicycle, motor cycle or private vehicle must include the mileage. The maximum we will pay for any return journey is £8.

Summary (HMRC April 2020)

Travel Maximum per return journey £8	By car	45p per mile [HMRC Dec 2022]
	By motor cycle	24p per mile [HMRC Dec 2022]
	By bicycle	20p per mile [HMRC Dec 2022]
	By public transport	Cheapest available ticket or pass
Meal	Volunteering more than 5 hours in one day	Up to £3 on production of receipts
Other	By agreement with Chair or Delivery Team Leader	As agreed in advance.

All claims must be submitted to the Treasurer³ on or before the last day of the month following the date on which the Expense was incurred.

Claims will be paid as soon as possible, preferably by Bank Transfer direct to the Sort Code and Account Number you provide using *Bank Details*¹, or by personal cheque if you indicate that preference. For personal safety and security reasons we will not reimburse in cash if you have a Bank Account.

If it is your preference to donate your Expenses, HMRC require that they must be claimed in the usual way and then donated using the methods open to the public, such as the Donations page of our Peer Support Plus website¹.

Expenses are reimbursed by Peer Support Plus 'gross'. You are responsible for declaring this 'income' and paying any Income Tax due on it.

Volunteers who receive benefits should note that the Department for Work and Pensions view travel expenses as 'income' that should be declared.

Volunteers who are in receipt of incapacity or other disability benefit should seek independent advice from a reliable source before Volunteering.

Intoxicants

Peers and colleagues at Peer Support Plus rely on you to perform your role to the best of your capability that day. To give of your best, your mind and body must be free of intoxicating substances.

Volunteering while under the influence of non-prescription drugs, substance abuse or alcohol consumption is prohibited. (On premises where face to face meetings are held, smoking is only permitted if a specific 'smoking area' is provided.)

Communications

We use *Email Bulletins*¹ paper Briefings and occasional Meetings to update everyone who engages with Peer Support Plus about forthcoming events; and about any significant changes in our continuously evolving 12-month development plan, organisation, policies, procedures and funding situation.

Anyone may apply to become a Voting Member of Peer Support Plus, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registered Charity Number 1190818. Voting Members elect our Board of Trustees who direct the Charity and decide matters such as organisation, policy and procedures. See *Constitution*¹ and *Membership Policy*¹.

Our Board of Trustees actively encourages everyone who engages with Peer Support Plus to help us become more effective and efficient by contributing ideas, and by engaging in focus groups and working parties to help Trustees and the Delivery Team Lead decide and achieve.

Volunteer Recruitment

Peer Support Plus aims to make its Volunteer Recruitment process as clear, simple and informal as possible, so that nobody is put off by it.

We welcome applications to Volunteer when we:

- Have a vacancy to fill an existing Role Description, or can develop a valuable role around the specific skills and experience you offer.
- Are confident, and you are confident, that you are capable of and committed to carrying out the Role Description.
- Can provide you with a reasonable level of support based on our experience of supporting Volunteers in this or similar roles.

We believe recruitment must be a two-way conversation between equals, enabling the potential Volunteer and Peer Support Plus to gather sufficient information about each other's needs and capabilities to decide whether or not we both want to commit to engaging in a *Volunteer Relationship*¹.

Some Volunteers may perform more than one role. Every ongoing role has a Role Description, regardless of the number of hours required to perform it.

If you would like to Volunteer at Peer Support Plus please contact our Delivery Team Lead².

When offering to Volunteer for a specific Role Description, if you would need particular resources or reasonable adjustments to enable you to perform it please let us know what you would need.

<https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

*Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks*¹

In the nature of Peer Support Plus some Peers, would-be Peers, Volunteers and Employees may already be, or may become, Adults at Risk, see *Safeguarding Policy*¹. It may not be possible to identify who is an Adult at Risk at any given time.

Volunteers may be required to evidence a recent Basic DBS Check containing details of any unspent convictions or conditional cautions.

Some Roles may require Volunteers to undergo or evidence a recent Standard DBS Check containing information about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings (as long as they are not protected). Other Roles may require an Enhanced DBS Check that can also include other non-conviction information that the police believe is relevant.

None of the current Roles at Peer Support Plus meet the Government's eligibility criteria for Enhanced DBS Plus Checks, which include the Adult Barred List.

Volunteers will only be requested to provide relevant information during the recruitment process and anything communicated verbally or in writing will be considered confidential – see *Privacy Policy*¹.

Our **Statement of Policy on recruiting ex-offenders** is published in *Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks*¹. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent Peer Support Plus from accepting your offer to become a Volunteer but a Risk Assessment will be carried out in context of the Role and the information you disclose. This will be discussed with you as a potential Volunteer. If your offer is accepted it may be conditional upon receiving a current DBS Check consistent with your disclosure. See also:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-workforce-guidance>

If Peer Support Plus decides against accepting your offer to Volunteer for a particular role, we will tell you why. We may be able to signpost you to other volunteering opportunities at Peer Support Plus, or to the Volunteer Centre at:

<https://doinggoleeds.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-centre-leeds/>

If you accept an offer from Peer Support Plus of a volunteering role, we will jointly prepare a personalised *Volunteer Relationship*¹ to read alongside the Role Description and to sign confirming that you fully understand what we will expect of each other. The Relationship between you and Peer Support Plus is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract between us but it is important that we are able to maintain agreed standards of service for everyone who engages with Peer Support Plus, and it is important that volunteers enjoy making their contribution.

There will be a trial period of 8 weeks to give you and Peer Support Plus time to discover if we really are suited to one another. The trial period review will be conducted by your Mentor. You will be asked to review your Mentor's notes and record your agreement, to indicate that the notes fairly represent the important issues which emerged during your conversation.

If at any time you are having difficulty fulfilling your Role Description this should be discussed first with your Mentor. Peer Support Plus will aim to offer appropriate support and training but if the difficulty cannot be satisfactorily overcome then your Mentor will support you to explore options.

Training and Mentoring

Our Delivery Team Lead² is responsible for organising Volunteer Training, including mandatory induction training, introduction to and training specific to your role, and ensuring a Mentor is appointed to support you.

Mandatory induction training includes:

- Introduction to Peer Support Plus: its history, *Constitution*¹ as a C.I.O., *Vision, Values and Aims*¹, governance, sources of funds, organisation and 12-month plan.
- *This Volunteer Engagement Policy*¹.
- *Health and Safety Policy*¹ and First Aid. (First Aid Training if needed, at the level of skill appropriate to each Volunteer's Health and Safety role, will usually be provided following this mandatory induction training.)
- *Safeguarding Policy*¹.
- *Privacy Policy*¹.
- *Equality and Diversity*¹.
- *Comments, Compliments and Complaints*¹.
- *Whistleblowing*¹
- Domestic matters such as: layout of premises; first aid; fire exits and evacuation procedures; introductions to colleagues; relevant contact names, means or contact and hours of availability; administration procedures; access to video meetings and office facilities; refreshments; etc.
- An opportunity to ask anything relevant to your first Volunteer role.

Volunteers will be trained in other aspects of our Policy and Procedures appropriate to their role and the skills and experience they bring to the role.

We aim to ensure Volunteers who succeed in training as Facilitators for Peer Support Plus are Accredited, so their new skills are both valuable and transferable.

Responsibility for monitoring how well you perform your role(s) lies with the Delivery Team Lead², supported by your Mentor.

By Mentoring we mean a learning, development and guiding partnership between someone with greater knowledge and experience and someone who

wants to learn. Your Mentor may be older or younger than you but they will aspire to be an interested, accessible, informal, role model.

You will meet your Mentor, in person when practical or by video or telephone if that is more appropriate, as agreed between you but at least once every four months, to formally review your Volunteer experiences with Peer Support Plus and discuss how your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with Peer Support Plus might develop in future. Your Mentor will ask questions and make notes. The questions will include:

- Are you enjoying your role?
- How are you getting on with other people engaged with Peer Support Plus?
- What has gone well?
- What hasn't gone well?
- Are there improvements in performance of your present role(s) you would like to achieve?
- Do you need any additional support or training?
- Are there other roles you would like to be considered for?

You will be asked to review your Mentor's notes and record your agreement, to indicate that the notes fairly represent the important issues which emerged during your conversation.

If you wish to propose alterations to the Role Description or working procedures associated with a particular Volunteer role, or your time commitment to it, or if you no longer wish to continue in that role, please discuss this first with your Mentor.

Resolving problems

At all stages you will be freely able to express your views and can have a friend accompany you.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your work please:

- Arrange to meet your Mentor and explain your dissatisfaction.
- If at this meeting you don't find or agree on ways to overcome your concerns, please arrange to meet the Delivery Team Lead and try to agree ways forward.
- If that meeting does not resolve your dissatisfaction please use the *Comments, Compliments and Complaints*¹ process

If your work as a Volunteer does not meet our standards we will:

- Arrange for you to meet your Mentor and explore our concerns.

- If at this meeting we don't find or agree on ways to overcome our concerns, we will arrange for you to meet the Delivery Team Lead² to try and agree ways forward.
- If your work as a Volunteer still does not meet our standards, we will invite you to stop Volunteering in that role.

Ending your Volunteer Relationship with Peer Support Plus

If, for any reason, we decide we can no longer offer you the opportunity to Volunteer in a particular role at Peer Support Plus, we will tell you why.

If something has gone amiss in your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with us which can't be resolved as described in **Resolving Problems** (above), please use *Comments, Compliments and Complaints*¹ to tell us about it, rather than just walking away.

When you feel the time is right to end your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with us and move on, please tell either your Mentor or the Delivery Team Lead². In case you change your mind, we will wait 4 weeks before formally noting in our records that your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with us has ended.

Alternatively, if you haven't told us you will be absent and don't make any contact with Peer Support Plus for 8 weeks, we will conclude that you have chosen to end your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with us and formally note that in our records.

We would like you to tell us why you have chosen to move on. If you haven't told us we will contact you and seek to ask questions that will help us explore your experience of volunteering at Peer Support Plus, so we can learn what to do better.

When your *Volunteer Relationship*¹ with Peer Support Plus ends, your last Mentor will write and record a brief assessment of your contribution to Peer Support Plus which will be endorsed by the current Delivery Team Lead². This assessment will form the basis of any Reference you ask us to provide. Peer Support Plus will not supply any Reference unless you have asked us to. The current Delivery Team Lead² is the only person authorised by Peer Support Plus to give References. They will not give a verbal Reference without your written permission. A copy of any written Reference you ask them to supply will be sent to you. You will, whenever possible, be given the opportunity to dispute anything contained in a written Reference.

It is OK to leave and it is OK to come back

That is one of our *Guidelines for Behaviour*¹, and we mean it.

Notes

¹ available on our website peersupportplus.org

² Delivery Team Lead, Peer Support Plus CIO
c/o 1 Elmete Close, Leeds, LS8 2LD

Email c/o chair@peersupportplus.org

Tel. 07434 614 829

³ Treasurer, Peer Support Plus CIO
c/o 1 Elmete Close, Leeds, LS8 2LD

Email treasurer@peersupportplus.org

Tel. 07434 614 829

End