

## **Volunteer Policy**

*First presented to the Board of Trustees: 28 March 2024*

*Last updated:*

### **Patchwork Foundation's Mission**

Patchwork Foundation promotes and encourages the positive integration of under-represented, underserved, and minority communities into public life and civic engagement. Our mission is to empower individuals from diverse backgrounds through training, education, and exposure to leadership opportunities, enabling them to become active citizens and leaders in society.

### **Introduction**

Patchwork believes in the value of voluntary activity as an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of a free and democratic society. It supports and promotes volunteering in public and third-sector organisations.

Patchwork takes responsibility for ensuring that volunteers within its own organisation are appropriately involved, valued for their contribution and respected as colleagues. This volunteer policy and accompanying guidelines are intended for use by Patchwork paid staff and volunteers.

In adopting this volunteer policy, Patchwork wishes to:

- formally acknowledge and support the role of volunteers in its work;
- set out the principles governing the involvement of volunteers and provide a set of guidelines to ensure good practice in working with volunteers; and,
- encourage and enable, rather than restrict, the involvement of volunteers.

For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who does voluntary work on our behalf, with voluntary work defined as: "Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment" (helping out Survey volunteering England 2007).

As an employer and engager of volunteers Patchwork is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. This principle will apply to service delivery, recruitment, promotion, training, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions.

Patchwork believes that the relationship with our volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which the charity and our volunteers both have rights and responsibilities.

We hope that volunteers will enjoy their involvement and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives. We will actively seek to involve volunteers in all aspects of our work, complying with the procedures detailed below.

### **Purpose of this policy**

This policy sets out a framework of best practice and procedures, which we will follow when recruiting, selecting, managing and supporting volunteers. The policy:

- recognises the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the charity;
- establishes clear principles for the involvement of volunteers;
- gives a framework for recruiting and supporting volunteers;
- commits the charity's trustees to identify and adequately meet the financial and personnel costs of the volunteer programme and to support volunteering through funding and other forms of help; and,
- recognises the contribution all its volunteers make in a range of ways.

### **Volunteering and Patchwork alumni**

Patchwork volunteering opportunities provide an opportunity for individuals to support the charity. Whilst there may be some benefits for the individuals concerned, such as building understanding of working in the charity sector or broadening engagement with democratic institutions, the primary intention of these opportunities is to help the charity to deliver its core programmes.

Patchwork also delivers an alumni programme to provide opportunities to support the ongoing development of individuals who have previously participated in one of our core programmes. Please refer to our Alumni Policy for more information on this programme.

Patchwork values the continued engagement of its alumni and welcomes the support provided by its alumni through volunteer opportunities to contribute to the Foundation's mission. Whilst most of our volunteers are drawn from Patchwork alumni, it is important that individuals recognise the difference between our volunteering and alumni support opportunities.

### **General**

In involving volunteers, we will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Volunteers receive specific role descriptions and volunteer agreements, ensuring they have clear expectations of their role.
- Volunteers have a named person as their main point of contact and are able to contact the Programme Manager outside of service hours if necessary to discuss any concerns.
- Training and support will be offered to volunteers. We ensure that volunteers feel part of the organisational structure by enabling them to contribute to our ongoing development.

- Information given to volunteers, and forms they are asked to complete, are clear and easy to understand.
- Volunteers are reimbursed for all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses.
- Within the resources available, the charity will try to meet additional equipment or support needs to enable disabled people to participate fully as a volunteer.
- We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage; procedures are in place to deal with complaints either by or about volunteers.
- We do not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and do not expect volunteers to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or roles. We do, expect, however, that all volunteers will abide by the relevant policies of the charity, copies of which can be found within the Volunteer Handbook. This includes Patchwork's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- All volunteers are expected and required to treat each other and all of the charity's staff and stakeholders with respect and fairness.
- Volunteers are bound by the same confidentiality conditions as Patchwork employed staff.
- Our Health and Safety Policy covers volunteers and we take care not to expose volunteers to risks to their health and safety, and that of others.
- There is no formal/legal agreement between the charity and its volunteers - when volunteers give their time for a given number of hours, this is entirely at their discretion.
- We will update our guidance in line with relevant changes in either law or in the scope of volunteer roles.

### **Role descriptions**

A Volunteer Role Description will be drawn up for all volunteer roles, which will include details of the Programme Manager.

The Volunteer Role Description ensures volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and will minimally include:

- the volunteer's role title;
- a list of tasks and responsibilities;
- times/days and location of volunteering activity;
- whether the role is anticipated to be short-term or ongoing; and,
- the person who will be their main contact.

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment process for volunteers will help establish whether potential volunteers and the charity meet each other's interests and needs. The process will include an informal interview and any safeguarding checks deemed necessary.

Recruitment of volunteers will be from all sections of the community and will be in line with Patchwork's Equal Opportunities Policy. In line with our wider charitable mission, we may focus our recruitment efforts to disadvantaged and

minority communities. In particular, we will usually advertise our volunteering opportunities to Patchwork alumni for up to 18 months after they have completed one of our core programmes and other supporters.

### **Selection**

The selection process for volunteers interested in volunteering will include:

- an opportunity to discuss volunteering opportunities with a relevant member of the Patchwork staff team;
- completing a volunteer registration form; and,
- an interview with the Programme Manager.

In line with our wider charitable mission, in the event that there are more individuals applying for the volunteer roles available, we will give priority to applicants from disadvantaged and minority communities.

We will also seek to provide opportunities to as many individuals as possible across the range of our volunteering opportunities, so may favour applicants who have had fewer opportunities than others.

Where a volunteer role requires a volunteer to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if the volunteer has completed one within the previous three (3) calendar months, we will not ask them to complete a further check but will request to see the original notification.

We reserve the right to request a further DBS check based on the applicant's criminal record or other relevant information that may have changed since its issue. Having a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to anyone who applies to be involved with our work and only relevant convictions will be taken into account when considering a prospective volunteer's application.

At any point in the selection process, if a potential volunteer is considered unsuitable for a role, the charity will explain its reasons to that volunteer.

### **Induction**

All volunteers will receive an induction, determined by the Programme Manager, which will be in keeping with the duration and nature of the volunteering activity.

The Programme Manager will:

- Provide the volunteer with a written description of the volunteering role outlining specific and general tasks, responsibilities and to whom they will report.
- Ensure that volunteers are aware of their agreed responsibilities with regards to confidentiality.
- Organise an induction to the organisation, ensuring volunteers are aware of all relevant policies, procedures and forms

- Ensure volunteers have adequate work space, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely.
- For longer volunteering opportunities, arrange a short, trial period during which volunteers will receive training, support and feedback, including the chance for them to feedback their views and concerns. At the end of the trial, if it is decided that the volunteer is not best suited to the needs of the charity an alternative voluntary role may be suggested and support will be given to find this. It is hoped that, if a volunteer considers a volunteer role does not fulfil their requirements, they feel able to withdraw their help without fear of embarrassment.
- Make up and maintain a confidential file for the Volunteer. The file will be held in a secure manner in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The file should contain the application form, the volunteer agreement, training record and emergency contact details.
- Provide ongoing support on a regular basis.

### **Volunteer Agreement**

All volunteers will sign a Volunteer Agreement, which outlines the voluntary arrangement between the volunteer and the charity. It will also be signed by the Programme Manager. It is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. This agreement is intended to be flexible enough to take account of changes in a volunteer's circumstances or in the requirements of the charity.

### **Volunteer Expenses**

Patchwork believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage, through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis, and is committed to meet, within resources available, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers. Receipts for any costs should be provided.

### **Problem solving**

In any organisation, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that this will not be the case, if there are any concerns volunteers should in the first instance speak to the Programme Manager who will try and resolve the matter informally. If the matter remains unresolved, reference will be made to the Complaints Policy, a copy of which is available from Programme Manager. All complaints will be dealt with within 10 working days and treated in a confidential manner.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, the Programme Manager should investigate to find out what is happening. This includes talking with the volunteer concerned. If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer should be informed that s/he will be offered 'special guidance' for a period. The object of 'special guidance' will be to encourage improvement. If a volunteer does not meet our standards of performance or the steps we have taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer will be asked to cease their volunteer role unless there

are any more suitable voluntary activities available. If behaviour, which in the charity's view, is equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred, then the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately

If volunteers have any safeguarding concerns these should be flagged to Patchwork's Designated Safeguarding Lead per the Safeguarding Policy.

### **Ending Involvement**

Although both Patchwork and a volunteer can end their volunteering arrangement at any time and without any notice, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, the charity will aim to give a volunteer at least two (2) weeks' notice, hoping that they will offer the same to us.

The decision to ask a volunteer to leave will be a last resort. It might not be possible to keep a volunteer, for reasons nothing to do with the person's performance, due to, for example, a project ending. It may be necessary ask a volunteer to leave due to, for example, poor performance, misconduct, attendance irregularities, DBS issues, or, criminal convictions. Every effort will be made to ensure that the reasons for ending an involvement are clarified, recorded and shared with the volunteer.

### **References**

If asked, either during a volunteer's time with us or when it ends, we will supply a reference, based on a volunteer's service with the charity, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

### **Insurance**

Patchwork's volunteers are covered by its Employers and Public Liability insurance policies. The charity is responsible for the actions of its volunteers in the course of their duties and will take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimise accident, injury, loss or damage.

### **Monitoring and Review**

It will be the responsibility of the Programme Manager to ensure that the Volunteer Information File is in accordance with current legislation, best practice in relation to managing and supporting volunteers.

Patchwork will systemically monitor and evaluate its involvement of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy. The trustees will review the operation and management of the volunteering programme at least annually.

## Volunteering Guidelines

These guidelines sit alongside the Volunteer Policy and give further detail on recommended good practice in the involvement of Patchwork volunteers,

### Volunteer Sign Up

- Sign-up to volunteer for an event via the Google Form links shared via email and WhatsApp. Only sign up for the sessions to which you are able and willing to commit.
- Signing up does not guarantee you will be selected as volunteer.
- Once you sign-up, you will receive an email confirming if you have been selected to volunteer, if you will be a reserve volunteer, or if you are not needed in any capacity.
- Volunteer selections are based on availability.
- If you are not selected for one session but signed up for several, it may be that we are reserving you for a session down the line.
- Let us know if you can no longer be considered as a reserve volunteer.
- If the session is a Special or Alumni Masterclass, and you sign up to volunteer but are not needed, you may be invited to attend the session as an attendee.
- Volunteers and their roles may change at the discretion of the Patchwork team, to ensure everyone has a fair opportunity but also dependent on other variables, such as availability, topic, type of roles and record as a volunteer. Please note that volunteer roles are non-negotiable

### Code of Conduct

- We expect volunteers to act as ambassadors of Patchwork and to behave in a professional manner at all times and in a way that will reflect positively on the charity's reputation.
- Arrive on time - timings will be clearly stated on your briefing paper.
- If you can no longer attend, or are running late, you should first email [masterclass@patchworkfoundation.org.uk](mailto:masterclass@patchworkfoundation.org.uk) immediately. If for any reason you cannot email, you should call or WhatsApp the point of contact listed in the briefing document. Ensure you know who this is ahead of the session.
- If you do not contact us, or do so with little or no justification as to why you were late or could not attend, this may impact whether you are invited to volunteer for Patchwork in the future. The same applies to any poor behaviour exhibited.
- As a volunteer, you are there to support the Patchwork team by facilitating the sessions and are not there in a participatory capacity e.g. you should not ask questions, ask people to take your photos etc.
- As with all Patchwork events, we ask that you remain non-partisan.
- Your role may change depending on the requirements of the team and a level of flexibility will be required.
- As a volunteer, you will abide by the relevant policies of the charity, copies of which can be found within the Volunteer Handbook.

- As a volunteer, you are expected and required to treat each other and all of the charity's staff and stakeholders with respect and fairness.
- Volunteers are bound by the same confidentiality conditions as Patchwork employed staff.