

Volunteer Policy & Procedures

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Directorate responsible for document:	Adult Community Services
Issue Date:	01 May 2026
Review Date:	01 May 2028



Policy Checklist

Policy name:	Volunteer Policy and Procedures
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Director responsible for Policy:	Brian Beattie
Directorate responsible for Policy:	Adult Community Services
Equality Screened by:	Carolyn Agnew Head of User Involvement and Community Development Gerardette McVeigh, Kate Johnston, Donna Sloan Volunteer Co-ordinators
Trade Union consultation?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Policy Implementation Plan included?	Yes ☒ No ☐
Date approved by Policy Scrutiny Committee:	15 April 2026
Date approved by SMT:	Click here to enter a date.
Policy circulated to:	Directors, Assistant Directors & Heads of Service for onward cascading to line managers; staff identified as key workers in relation to volunteering; Southern I; active and prospective volunteers.
Policy uploaded to:	Sharepoint, Trust website

Version Control

Version:	Version 3_0		
Supersedes:	The Legacy Trust’s volunteer policies; SHSCT Volunteer Policy Version 1_0 (Dec 2008) and version 2 (May 2014)		
Version History			
Version	Notes on revisions/modifications and who document was circulated or presented to	Date	Lead Policy Author
Version 3_0	The policy and been shared with, reviewed and contributed to by, Volunteer Now – Volunteer policy framework, Investing in Volunteers standards and practice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Feedback received from key workers and active volunteers.	01/05/2026	Kevin Duggan

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The Southern Health & Social Care Trust (hereinafter referred to as 'the Trust') is committed to involving volunteers and this policy has been developed to promote and provide guidance on the appropriate involvement of volunteers throughout the Trust and to ensure that the interests of recipients, volunteers and staff are adequately protected.
- 1.2.** Volunteers contribution is welcomed and greatly appreciated. The Trust supports the view that there is a very valuable and purposeful role for volunteers, which is separate and distinct from that of paid workers and therefore not job substitution. Operating within the constraints of this policy, the Trust aims to offer volunteers a variety of interesting and satisfying tasks that will enhance the quality of care or service provided to service users without impinging on the role of paid staff.
- 1.3.** The Trust actively encourages partnerships with the statutory, voluntary and community organisations in the development of volunteering. Not only is the contribution of volunteers valued, but also the commitment and resources of the Volunteer Support Agencies which operate in some areas to organise and co-ordinate volunteers in the local community.
- 1.4.** The Volunteer Policy marks the commitment of the Trust to promoting volunteering, whether through the direct involvement of volunteers in its work, or that of independent service providers, or through the many voluntary organisations that provide health and social care services.

2. Definition of Volunteering

- 2.1.** The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has adopted the following definition of volunteering

"Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside, (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice"

(Department for Social Development, Join in Get Involved, Build a Better Future 2012)

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1.** The aim of this policy is to provide guidance on the appropriate involvement of volunteers within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in line with the Regional Plan for Volunteering in Health and Social Care 2016-2018.
- 3.2.** The objectives of the volunteer policy are to:
 - 3.2.1.** Provide a definition of volunteering which the Trust has adopted
 - 3.2.2.** Provide clear demarcation between volunteering and paid employment to avoid job substitution

- 3.2.3.** Provide clear guidance on what the Trust's responsibilities are in relation to its volunteers
- 3.2.4.** Provide clear guidance on what a volunteer should expect and their responsibilities
- 3.2.5.** Provide clear guidance on the registration procedure for all volunteers
- 3.2.6.** Ensure that the Trust meets its statutory obligations in relation to the equality legislation.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1.** The Trust supports the view that there is a very valuable and purposeful role for volunteers, which is separate and distinct from that of paid workers.
- 4.2.** The Trust also recognises the important contribution volunteers are making in sustaining and promoting health and wellbeing, community development and the many vital health and social care services they deliver. The Trust will seek to provide a local environment for volunteering which will enable it to grow.
- 4.3.** The Trust values the involvement of volunteers in its work because they reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community it aims to serve and bring a unique perspective to all its work.
- 4.4.** The Trust believes that volunteers, through a variety of interesting and satisfying tasks, enhance the quality of care or service provided to patients/clients/residents by providing a complementary role alongside that of paid staff.
- 4.5.** Volunteers bring with them their own skills and talents, while increasing their own personal growth and development.
- 4.6.** Volunteers contribute to promoting equality of opportunity, social inclusion and help to decrease those who are disadvantaged in the community, thereby improving the quality of life for all.
- 4.7.** The Trust is committed to serving the entire population in the southern area and wishes to see all sections of the community represented among its volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are widely promoted and the Trust endeavours to make registration materials available in a format accessible to any individual or group, upon request. Furthermore the Trust regularly reviews its volunteer database to identify and target any under-represented group(s).
- 4.8.** Organisations contracted with the Trust to deliver social care services are required to encourage and promote voluntary activity whilst also operating a best practice system in respect of volunteer management in line with the contract. In addition, the Trust's grant schemes to community and voluntary organisations also ensure that good practice volunteer involvement is encouraged.

5. Scope of Policy

- 5.1.** The policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the Trust and refers to all services and activities of the Trust

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Responsibility of the Chief Executive

The Trust Chief Executive as Accountable Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that the purpose and aims of this policy are met.

6.2. Responsibility of Lead Director

The Director of Adult Community Services is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and to ensure sufficient resources are made available to support volunteering.

6.3. Responsibility of Directors/Senior Management

All Trust Directors, Assistant Directors, Heads of Services and Senior Managers have responsibility for the effective compliance of this policy and ensure arrangements are in place within their Directorate to support the role of volunteers.

6.4. Role of Front-Line Staff, Service and Line Managers

It is the responsibility of all staff to implement the policy and associated procedures as described in the appendices.

6.5. Responsibility of Volunteer Coordinator

It is the responsibility of the Trust's Volunteer Coordinators to ensure the implementation and compliance of the policy, and to ensure volunteers and relevant staff are aware of and understand the requirements of the policy along with their role and responsibility.

- 6.6.** For clarity, the following key operational positions in regard to the implementation of this policy and procedures are defined:-

6.6.1. Head of Community Development and User Involvement – is the strategic and operational lead for volunteering across the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

6.6.2. Trust Volunteer Coordinator - is responsible for co-ordinating volunteering activity within their locality; seeking and registering volunteers, developing volunteer roles in partnership with key workers, reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the volunteer service, providing advice on the volunteer policy and procedures. Development and delivery of training to volunteers and key workers and provide support and guidance to volunteers and key workers.

6.6.3. Service Manager – is responsible for identifying areas within their service where a volunteer could be placed, liaising with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator to develop an appropriate role description and ensuring that a

Key Worker is identified to support and supervise the volunteer as outlined in 2.5 below.

6.6.4. Key Worker – is responsible for inducting, supporting volunteers, completing a risk assessment before a volunteer commences their role and informing the Volunteer Coordinator of changes or issues affecting volunteers and by completing regular reviews on volunteer activity.

6.6.5. Volunteer Support Agency – is an external organisation contracted by the Trust to provide agreed recruitment and support for volunteers in line with the Trust's Volunteer Policy and Procedures.

7. Equality & Human Rights Considerations

7.1. This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

7.2. Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria; no significant equality implications have been identified. The policy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

7.3. Similarly, this policy has been considered under the terms of Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

8. Expectations

8.1. A volunteer can expect from the Trust:

8.1.1. A fair, effective and open volunteer promotion and registration process and assurance that volunteer roles are not job substitutions;

8.1.2. Specific information on the volunteer role including relevant legislation (as detailed at section 9) relevant Trust policies and procedures and guidelines on how to carry out the volunteer role;

8.1.3. Corporate and local induction and appropriate training to help the volunteer fulfil their volunteering role;

8.1.4. A trial period to see if the role is suitable and to resolve any problems that may arise;

8.1.5. Choice and flexibility -The opportunity to say no, opt out or to change tasks if he/she is unhappy in the voluntary role;

8.1.6. Clearly defined role of a Trust Volunteer Coordinator and regular support and supervision from a named key worker so the volunteer knows who to go to if they have a problem;

8.1.7. Volunteer Newsletter/Update emails;

8.1.8. Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses¹; Mileage expenses will be capped at 10,000 per year.

8.1.9. Provision of relevant equipment including protective clothing where appropriate e.g. Volunteer Polo shirt (all volunteers), Volunteer fleece (Here to Help), apron (mealtime support), PPE where & when required;

8.1.10. Safe and healthy volunteering and appropriate indemnity arrangements through a volunteer agreement;

8.1.11. Respect for diversity where people are treated fairly and equitably;

8.1.12. Assurance that during times of industrial action, you may continue with your volunteer role but will not be asked to do the work of paid staff nor to undertake additional duties outside your agreed role;

8.1.13. Volunteer Recognition Events

8.1.14. An annual review of the volunteer role.

8.2. The Trust expects from its volunteers

8.2.1. To do their volunteering reliably and with commitment;

8.2.2. To arrive at their role on time and if unable to attend contact their key worker in the first instance as soon as possible. To not to attend their volunteer role if feeling unwell;

8.2.3. To always act on and within the advice of the key worker within the boundaries of their role description;

8.2.4. To volunteer in a way which corresponds to the aims and values within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust;

8.2.5. To be honest - if any problems should arise, talk to their key worker or Volunteer Co-ordinator;

8.2.6. To attend training and support sessions if these are an agreed part of the voluntary role;

¹ The reimbursement rate for travel is linked to the rates set by HMRC, in line with Department of Health Circular [HSC\(F\)12-2021](#) of March 2021 and Regional Guidance and Procedures for the Reimbursement of Expenses for Service Users and Carers in the Department of Health and Health and Social Care Organisations. The 45p rate is effective from 1 April 2026.

8.2.7. To respect confidentiality both while volunteering and thereafter;

8.2.8. To be aware of your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the duty of confidentiality you owe to patients and clients. You are also responsible for adhering to the Trust's policies and procedures on Information Governance.

8.2.9. To highlight any issues that may contribute to the delivery of better services or a better patient/service user experience;

8.2.10. To respect the guidance on use of social media in relation to your role provided in the Trust's Social Media Policy. The Trust has a clear expectation that if a volunteer identifies an association with the Trust, discusses their volunteering contribution and/or colleagues, or comes into contact, or is likely to, with service users on any social media sites, he/she will behave appropriately and in a way which is consistent with the Trust's values. The duty to act in a manner that is in line with this policy does not only apply when a volunteer is carrying out his/her role, but at all times when a connection to the Trust has been made.

Volunteers are ultimately responsible for their own online behaviour. Volunteers must take care to avoid online content or actions that are inaccurate, libellous, defamatory, harassing, threatening or may otherwise be illegal. It is possible for volunteers to be subject to civil proceedings or criminal prosecution, in addition to any disciplinary action that may be taken;

8.2.11. To inform key worker or Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if for any reason you wish to stop volunteering. (If you feel your role is unsuitable it may be possible to find an alternative that is more appropriate). On ending volunteering all volunteers must return their volunteer clothing and Identity badge to the Volunteer Coordinator;

8.2.12. On completion of voluntary contribution with the Trust you remain bound by confidentiality and must not disclose any information or matter to which you have had access to or have become aware of during your time as a volunteer. (Should this happen the Trust reserves the right to take any action necessary as it considers appropriate in the circumstances);

8.2.13. To enjoy the whole volunteering experience.

8.3. Dealing with complaints or issues

8.3.1 The Trust aims to reflect the voluntary nature of its relationship with volunteers in its policies and procedures for managing volunteer involvement. Where issues/concerns arise they will be dealt with according to the procedure outlined in Appendix 8 Section 5

8.3.2 Recognising its duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of all its stakeholders, where potential conduct issues arise the Trust hold the

right to ask a volunteer to leave if there is a breach of confidentiality and/or gross misconduct. (Appendix 7 Volunteer Agreement)

- 8.3.3** While the Trust accepts liability for volunteers whilst undertaking their approved duties please note that where loss or damage arises as a result of the volunteer's negligence, breach or non-observance of regulations or codes of practice, then neither the Trust nor its servants or agents shall be deemed to be liable in connection therewith.

9. Legislative Framework

9.1. The legislative framework that governs the volunteer policy includes:

- Section 75, Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978
- PHA Community Development Strategy and Framework 2018
- Department for Social Development, Join in Get Involved, Build a Better Future 2012
- Regional Plan for Volunteering in Health and Social Care 2016-2018
- Making Life Better 2013 - 2023 DHSSPS
- Delivering Together - Health and Wellbeing 2020

9.2. Other relevant Trust policies include:

- Procedure regarding transport / driving duties
- Regional Guidance and Procedures for the Reimbursement of Expenses for Service Users and Carers in the Department of Health and Health and Social Care Organisations²
- PPI Framework 2018 and PPI Corporate Action Plan 2023-25
- Quality Improvement Strategy 2017/18 – 2020/21
- Our Vision and Strategy 2030

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1. The Trust is committed to ensuring that all policies are kept under review to ensure that they remain compliant with all relevant legalisation and reflect organisational development.

10.2. This policy will be reviewed by the Assistant Director Promoting Well Being within three years or earlier if required.

11. Alternative Formats

This document can be made available on request in alternative formats, e.g. plain English, Braille, disc, audiocassette and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

12. Copyright

² <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-hscf-12-2021.pdf>

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13. Sources of Advice & Further Information

13.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with related procedures in the Appendices.

13.2 Further advice and information regarding this policy document and associated procedures can be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinators.

13.3 Your local Volunteer Coordinator can be contacted at:

Promoting Wellbeing Team (Craigavon & Banbridge)	Promoting Wellbeing Team (Armagh & Dungannon)	Promoting Wellbeing Team (Newry & Mourne)
Brownlow H&SS Centre Craigavon BT65 5BE Tel: 028 3756 3949	St Luke's Hospital Site Armagh BT61 7NQ Tel: 028 3756 4498	John Mitchel Place Newry BT34 2BU Tel: 028 3756 6295

13.4 The Head of Service responsible for volunteering is:

Kevin Duggan
Head of Community Development and User Involvement
Promoting Wellbeing Division
Ward 1, St Luke's Hospital
71 Loughgall Road
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BT61 7NQ

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