

## **One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)**

### **Volunteer Policy and Procedural Guidelines**

#### **Statement of Policy**

OPEN believe that volunteers play a critical role in the success and development of the organisation and its member groups. OPEN's Board of management comprises of volunteers who use their own particular experience and expertise in a collective manner to govern the organisation.

OPEN is committed to ensuring that volunteers are provided with the information, training and support necessary to gain a valuable experience from volunteering within the organisation at all levels.

#### **Procedural Guidelines**

##### **1.General Principles**

###### **1.1 Scope**

The purpose of this volunteer policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to Board, staff and volunteers within OPEN. The policy does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. It supplements other policies as well as the organisations Mission, Strategies and Ethos. The policy applies to all volunteers within OPEN at all times.

###### **1.2 Responsibility**

The head of administration is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures in relation to volunteers are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff are expected to facilitate this process as required.

###### **1.3. Eligibility**

OPEN will consider involving anyone who expresses an interest in volunteering. However, individuals must be able to demonstrate a commitment to the organisations mission, ethos and strategies, and may only be placed if there is a match between the organisations needs and the interests/skills of the individual. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer.

###### **1.4 Relationship with paid staff**

Volunteers are recruited to enhance the capacity of paid staff and not as a substitute for them. The work of volunteers will be that of a supportive complimentary nature alongside paid staff. OPEN does not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers. Clear roles and responsibilities are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complimentary relationships.

###### **1.5 Working Conditions**

Volunteers are treated as full members of the OPEN team. They are treated as equally and as fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision making procedures wherever appropriate. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively.

### **1.6 Working times**

Working times will be negotiated between Volunteer and line manager for volunteer. When expected to be absent volunteers must inform their line manager at the earliest possible time so alternative arrangements can be made.

### **1.7 Appropriate behaviour**

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of OPEN and adhere to its ethos at all times.

### **1.8. Representation**

Volunteers will not act as representatives of OPEN unless explicitly agreed to by the Board and Chief Executive.

### **1.9 Confidentiality**

Volunteers are required at all times to maintain absolute confidentiality in respect of matters which come to their knowledge in the course of their work. This does not apply to communications properly made to them in the normal conduct of their work for the organisation or when specific consent to disclose information has been given by management. Breach of confidentiality is deemed to be gross misconduct.

### **1.10 Maintenance of Records**

A system of records will be maintained on each volunteer, including recruitment and selection process, dates of service, position held, duties performed, evaluation of work, recognition received. Volunteers and line managers shall be responsible for submitting all appropriate records and information to the Head of administration in a timely and accurate fashion.

Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

### **1.11 Service at the Discretion of OPEN**

Any volunteer service is at the discretion of OPEN.

OPEN may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteers relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with OPEN. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## **2. Recruitment and Management of Volunteers**

### **2.1. General practice**

The Board of OPEN is committed to ensuring that procedures and practice used in the recruitment and selection of volunteers are fair, consistent and effective.

### **2.2 Role Description**

Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description will be developed for each volunteering opportunity. This will include, title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of line manager/support worker and details of tasks to be undertaken.

### **2.3 Person Specification**

A person specification for each volunteering role will be developed that outlines the type of volunteer the organisation is looking for and identifying any skills or attributes that are deemed essential or desirable for the role.

This will be used in the recruitment process to;

- Help volunteers assess if they have the necessary qualities
- Outlines what is needed for the role
- Provide an objective way of determining volunteers suitability
- help identify training needs.

### **2.3. Recruitment**

Recruitment campaigns will be specific and targeted, using advertising avenues which are suitable for the roles required to be filled. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with OPEN recruitment policy and procedures.

### **2.4 Application**

Potential volunteers are expected to complete OPEN's volunteer application form (appendix 1) whether responding to an advertisement for volunteers or applying speculatively.

### **2.5 Interview**

Suitable candidates will be invited to attend for interview. The interview will be conducted in line with best practice and the organisations interview policy and procedures. Records of the process will be maintained.

### **2.6 Appointment**

Formal appointment will be made only after necessary reference checks are taken up. Offer of placement will be made in writing and acceptance is required in writing.

### **2.7 Volunteer Agreement**

All volunteers will be required to sign OPEN's volunteer agreement (appendix 2). The purpose of this agreement is to outline the terms of engagement and to underline the commitment of volunteering on the part of both OPEN and the volunteer.

### **2.8 Trial Period**

All placements are subject to a specified trial period. During this period volunteers will be supported and guided to understand all elements of the work assigned to them. There will be a formal review after one month and again after three. If there are difficulties which have been identified and not improved on the volunteer may be assigned to a more appropriate task or their service terminated.

## **2.9 Exit Interview**

Where possible, an exit interview will be undertaken with any volunteer who is leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their agreed placement time or for any other reason. Interviews will be conducted with the volunteer's supervisor and written records will be maintained. The interview will cover how the volunteer found working within OPEN and any suggestions they would give the organisation to improve the way its operates or supports volunteers

## **3. Training and Induction**

### **3.1 Induction**

All volunteers will receive an induction when they begin their volunteer work within OPEN. This will consist of general induction to the organisation as well as specific orientation on the purpose and requirements of their volunteering role.

### **3.2 On the job training**

Volunteers receive initial and on-going on the job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training will be appropriate to the demands of the work and the needs and capabilities of the volunteer.

### **3.4 Additional training**

Volunteers are encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences etc., which will help them to perform their roles and enhance their personal development. Request for financial assistance towards the cost of such training can be made in writing to the personnel sub-group of the Board.

## **4. Support and Supervision**

### **4.1 Support**

OPEN endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower the volunteer to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work within the organisation. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions which will provide volunteers with a safe setting in which to express themselves and discuss how they feel about their role within open.

### **4.2 Supervision**

Each volunteer will be assigned supervisor/support person who will provide regular support and supervision to the volunteer and be responsible for the day to day management of the volunteer. This is seen as a necessary structure in supporting the volunteer within their role.

### **4.3 Support and Supervision sessions**

These sessions will provide an opportunity to appraise the work based on the agreed role description. They will review performance of the volunteer , identify any changes required in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteers experience within OPEN, convey appreciation to the volunteer, ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer, in volunteering within OPEN and provide an opportunity to identify and agree future actions/targets.

#### **4.4 Lines of communication**

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and exist both formally and informally. Volunteers will be given access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their areas of responsibility. Volunteers will be expected to attend team meetings.

### **5. Discipline & Grievance**

#### **5.1 Discipline**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures or who consistently fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their direct supervisor and a member of the personnel sub-group or Deputy Director. Grounds for dismissal include gross misconduct, breach of confidentiality, failure to adhere to OPEN policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

#### **5.2 Grievance**

Where volunteers have a grievance about any aspect of their work, they must first discuss the issue with their director supervisor. The supervisor will consider the issue and decide on the most appropriate course of action. If the volunteer is unhappy with the decision, the matter can be referred to the personnel sub-group in writing. The decision of the personnel sub-group will be conveyed in writing and will be final.

### **6 Expenses**

The cost of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage volunteering. OPEN will reimburse any out of pocket expenses that the volunteer may incur while undertaking their voluntary work for the organisation. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are outlined within the policies and procedures of OPEN and are applicable to both staff and volunteers.

### **7. Insurance**

Insurance is provided by OPEN to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of OPEN.



Why are you interested in this particular area?

What are your reasons for applying to OPEN as a volunteer?

Do you have any previous experience of volunteer work? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
(if yes please give details)

What skills / qualities would you bring to OPEN?

What do you hope to gain from volunteering within OPEN?

Please use this space to include any further information you think may be relevant to your application.

**Contact details**

Full Name

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number/s: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

**References**

Please provide the names and addresses of two people, not relatives, who have known you for at least two years and who would be willing to act as referees.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity do you know the persons named as referees?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration**

I declare that the information given above is correct and complete

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Volunteer Agreement**

This agreement is intended to indicate the seriousness to which OPEN treats its volunteers. The intention of the agreement is to assure volunteers of our appreciation of their support and service and to indicate our commitment to do the very best we can to make all volunteer placements within OPEN productive and rewarding both for the individual volunteer and the organisation.

**OPEN**

On behalf of the Board of management of OPEN, I \_\_\_\_\_ am pleased to accept the services of \_\_\_\_\_ (volunteer) beginning on \_\_\_\_\_ and we commit to the following;

- To provide adequate information, training and assistance to support the volunteer to meeting the responsibilities of the volunteering role.
- To ensure satisfactory supervisory support to the volunteer and to provide feedback on performance
- To respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer, and to do our best to adjust individual requirements.
- To be receptive to any comments from the volunteer regarding ways in which we might mutually better accomplish our respective tasks.
- To treat the volunteer as an equal partner with the organisation's staff, jointly responsible for the completion of the organisation's goals and the fulfilment of its mission.

**The Volunteer**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Volunteer) agree to serve as a volunteer and commit to the following;

- To perform my volunteer duties to the best of my ability.
- To adhere to OPEN's policies and procedures, including record keeping requirements and confidentiality.
- To meet time and duty commitments, except in exceptional circumstances, or to provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be arranged.
- To undertake to attend training events and team meetings as required.
- To make a commitment to volunteer for agreed time/project period.

Agreed by: Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of OPEN \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

This agreement may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party, but will expire automatically on \_\_\_\_\_ unless renewed by both parties.



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