

SAFFRON WALDEN MENCAP SOCIETY

VOLUNTEER POLICY

March 2024

This policy has been adopted by Saffron Walden Mencap Society through its Trustees Committee which remains responsible for its review.

Original signed version is kept at the SWMS Registered office.

Signed: *Patrick Draper* Date: 4th March 2024

Chair of Trustees

Reviewed :- March 2025
Next Review - March 2026

1. Introduction

Saffron Walden Mencap Society is immensely grateful to all of our volunteers, without whom we would be unable to provide the variety of clubs and activities available as choices for our members.

We are fortunate to have help from people of all ages and backgrounds, with a variety of skills and experience, who freely choose to give their time to support our charity. There are several ways in which volunteering is integral to the running of Saffron Walden Mencap such as -

- Supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autism by attending and being part of our regular clubs and activities.
- Guidance and governance, by becoming a Trustee.
- Fundraising.
- Transporting our members who otherwise might not be able to attend a club, activity, or trip.
- Attending our events and trips as a volunteer.

2. Aims of this policy

1. To set out how Saffron Walden Mencap Society values and supports our volunteers.
2. To explain the procedures used to recruit, support and involve volunteers.
3. To ensure Saffron Walden Mencap Society complies with legal obligations and good practice when involving volunteers in the organisation.

3. Principles

This policy is guided by the following principles:

We will ensure that volunteers are valued as part of our team supporting our members by following a recruitment and induction process which will prepare them for their role, this will include providing a mandatory enhanced DBS check for all over 16's and provision of all relevant policies and procedures.

This policy applies to regular volunteers who have an ongoing role with Saffron Walden Mencap Society and to trustees and staff who manage or work alongside volunteers. One off tasks such as occasional fundraising separate to our clubs and member attended events are classed as 'one off volunteering' which is not relevant to this policy.

4. Procedures

Recruitment

- Most volunteers will come to Saffron Walden Mencap Society through our website or directly to our current volunteers and staff. When the need arises we will publicise volunteering opportunities through our local volunteering network or other organisations such as local sixth form/careers leaders.
- People interested in volunteering will be matched to a club and will be invited for an informal chat with the project coordinator/leader, followed by an opportunity to shadow a staff member or volunteer during the club/event session.
- If we are able to offer an opportunity to participate in a volunteering role, it will be subject to an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service, and two references, in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.
- Under 16's -We may occasionally be able to offer volunteering opportunities to young people under the age of 16. In such circumstances a parent or guardian must be a counter signatory on all induction documents and agreements and a written reference from an educational establishment or organisation will be required. DBS checks will be carried out when the young person reaches the age of 16.
- We will provide all volunteers with our Volunteer Agreement which demonstrates our support for volunteers and explains what we would like from our volunteers in return, to which the volunteer is required to sign to confirm agreement. Volunteers will also be required to agree in writing to following the charity's Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Contract.
- Volunteers will be invited to an induction session with the project coordinator/leader with the aim of ensuring that they receive a role description, copies of key policies and procedures, a copy of the volunteer agreement & code of conduct, and advice to prepare them for their involvement. Under 16's will have a designated mentor present who may be an experienced volunteer.
- After appointment, volunteers will have a trial period of up to 4 weeks or 4 sessions, depending on the frequency of volunteering, to ensure that they are in the right volunteering role for them.

Attendance

To assist us in planning our activities, we ask where possible that volunteers aim for a regular pattern of sessions or times for volunteering, however if feeling unwell, volunteers should not attend any club, event or session. If a volunteer is unable to attend as planned, the project leader should be informed giving as much notice as possible. Saffron Walden Mencap Society will be responsible for informing volunteers if a session is cancelled.

Trustees

The board of Trustees will meet four times each year in order to run Saffron Walden Mencap Society efficiently. Saffron Walden Mencap Society will ensure that the board have a range of skills and experience and wherever possible or required will undertake a relevant subject role as a Trustee. We will endeavour to ensure that at least half of our trustees have their own experience of learning disabilities because of personal, voluntary or professional experiences or because they have a learning disability and/or autism themselves. Trustees will be required to, wherever possible, attend every meeting - any planned absence must be reported to the Chair and/or Secretary prior to the meeting.

5. Complaints/Problem solving

Any concerns from the organisation or from volunteers themselves in relation to their role will normally be discussed between the volunteer and project leader. The aim of such discussions will be to explore how best the concerns can be addressed.

If a volunteer has a complaint, the volunteer should speak to the project leader about their concern. If the complaint is against this named person the complaint may be referred to another member of staff, or to the chairperson or a trustee. Contact details are available on www.saffronwaldenmencapsociety.co.uk

We will try to resolve any volunteer complaint as quickly as possible, normally within 2 weeks. If a problem cannot be resolved within 2 weeks, the volunteer will be contacted within this time and the problem will continue to be investigated and resolved as soon as possible. Volunteer complaints can be made in writing if they are not satisfied that their oral complaint has been resolved.

Volunteers are not covered by Saffron Walden Mencap's disciplinary and grievance policies. They are however included in the whistleblowing policy, a copy of which is included in the induction pack.

6. Ongoing support

Saffron Walden Mencap Society recognises that working with people with a learning disability can be both rewarding and challenging, and ensure that volunteers during clubs, events and activities will -

- Be given sufficient information by the project leader or staff member on their behalf, about the risk assessment of individuals, where this is necessary for the member's health, safety and enjoyment of activities.
- Work under the supervision of a paid staff member at all times* (*see below*).
- Never be left alone with a member, or be asked to take sole responsibility for their safety and wellbeing* (*see below*).
- Be expressly excluded from any participation in the personal care of a member, this includes toileting and washing, combing hair etc.
- Be supported and encouraged to raise concerns about the role they are being asked to do with staff or the project leader.
- Be included in group training sessions or meetings where it will be beneficial to their role.

**(Saffron Walden Mencap Society has a separate drivers' policy which includes guidance for drivers who volunteer to transport members to and from clubs and activities. All volunteer drivers will be required to sign a drivers' agreement).*

Volunteer expenses

Volunteers should not be financially at a loss as a result of their volunteering role. As such we encourage volunteers to claim out-of-pocket expenses by using the appropriate forms available from project leaders with receipts attached.

Typical out-of-pocket expenses can include:

- Transport: public transport costs, car parking costs (up to a maximum of £5 per day) and car mileage.
- Food: volunteers participating in an activity for more than 5 hours in one day can claim for the cost of a meal, up to £5.
- Other necessary ad-hoc expenses in connection with the role, where agreed with the supporting manager.

Departure of Volunteers

When a volunteering placement comes to an end, the project coordinator/leader will arrange an informal exit discussion with the volunteer. Volunteers are also welcome to request references from us to support future paid work, volunteer placements and/or training.

7. Managing risk

Saffron Walden Mencap Society conducts and reviews risk assessments in relation to premises we use, activities we carry out and the people we support. Volunteers are expected to take account of these risk assessments in carrying out their role and raise any queries with their supporting manager.

Insurance

Volunteers are covered under Saffron Walden Mencap's Employer's Liability Insurance whilst they are on the premises or engaged in activities on our behalf.

Health and Safety

Saffron Walden Mencap Society is committed to the safety of its service users, staff and volunteers. Volunteers will be issued with a copy of the health and safety policy and are required to adhere to it at all times. If a volunteer has any queries or concerns they should raise this with their project leader or staff member.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Saffron Walden Mencap Society recognises its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding service users. All trustees, staff and volunteers are required to complete safeguarding training and adhere to Saffron Walden Mencap Society's Safeguarding policy at all times.

Any breach of Saffron Walden Mencap Society's safeguarding policy is likely to lead to the volunteering placement coming to an end.

Saffron Walden Mencap will also notify relevant authorities, including the Disclosure and Barring Service of a **serious** breach where necessary to refer, investigate or safeguard vulnerable adults in the future.

Equality and diversity

Saffron Walden Mencap Society's equality and diversity policy states that we recognise that certain individuals and groups face discrimination. We are committed to working towards eliminating this. Saffron Walden Mencap Society recognised that the equalities act 2010 applies solely to paid employment, but it is also our intention that the aims and principles of our policy should cover volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of the policy and will be expected to adhere to it at all times.

8. Responsibilities in relation to this policy.

Trustees

- To approve and review the policy on a regular basis
- To take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the policy is being implemented.

Staff - project coordinators/leaders

- To act in accordance with the policy.
- To communicate the policy to other staff and volunteers and to ensure it is being implemented correctly.

All Staff and volunteers

- To familiarise themselves and act in accordance with the policy

Related policies and procedures

- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety
- Volunteer Code of conduct
- Confidentiality
- Equality and diversity
- Whistleblowing
- Transport Policy (where applicable)