

# VOLUNTEER

# POLICY

# MAHDL. O. ICHAM

## Document Control

**Document Developed by:** Vicky Richardson – Volunteering and Training Co-ordinator

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**Approved by:** Dave Benstead on behalf of the Board

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**For further information:** Vicky Richardson – Volunteering and Training Co-ordinator

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

Volunteering as a principle is at the heart of the organisation; from our volunteers who form a core part of the delivery team, to encouraging young people to participate as young leaders within the centre and contribute to their communities through the Get Connected programme.

We recognise that the scale of our volunteer involvement requires its own policy and procedures to underpin good practice and ensure the welfare of users, staff and volunteers.

#### ***A definition of volunteering***

A volunteer is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice, without the expectation of financial reward, except for the payment of actual expenses. Mahdlo cannot commit to giving regular opportunities, payment or other benefits to any individual who chooses to join us as a volunteer, or to guarantee that volunteering will lead to paid employment.

### **1.2 Purpose of the policy**

- To provide a foundation on which to base our involvement of volunteers
- To underpin good practice in the safer recruitment, supervision and retention of volunteers
- To give a consistent approach to ensure volunteers are supported during their time with us
- To recognise the nature of the volunteering relationship
- To help ensure fairness and consistency when working with a diverse range of people

### **1.3 Vision & Values (developed in partnership with the young people's development group)**

We believe that everyone benefits from the involvement of volunteers:

- The volunteers themselves benefit for a variety of reasons including gaining experience relevant to career choices, developing confidence or simply having the chance to make a positive contribution.
- The children and young people benefit through having access to increased opportunities and a more diverse range of adult role models
- Staff learn from the different skills and experiences that volunteers bring and it helps them remain engaged with the hopes and needs of our communities
- The organisation benefits from being able to increase the range and quality of activities on offer

We believe that volunteers are important members of our team as they help us stay open and engaging 365 days of the year. To realise these benefits we recognise that volunteers require:

- appropriate management and support from across the organisation
- investment in training and personal development

We also recognise that feedback from volunteers is valuable and needs to be listened to if we are to constantly improve.

## **2.0 COMMITMENTS**

We aim to be transparent about the nature of the volunteer relationship at Mahdlo and ask all volunteers to read and sign a non-binding volunteer agreement before commencing work with us.

### **2.1 Mahdlo's commitment to volunteers**

We will:

- provide a supportive and positive environment that ensures volunteers enjoy their volunteering experience
- treat you with respect and courtesy
- treat you fairly regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, parental or marital status, disability, religion, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, or socio/economic background
- provide an appropriate induction, and opportunities to undertake appropriate training
- provide a named contact for support
- provide relevant and up to date information and advice
- provide recognition and thanks
- reimburse any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of your volunteering (in line with Mahdlo's expenses procedure)
- provide adequate public liability insurance & risk assessment of activities
- respect your right to privacy and that of your contacts

### **2.2 What we ask of our volunteers**

You will:

- complete a one month trial in your volunteer role
- support our aims and objectives

- remember that you are a representative of Oldham Youth Zone
- be clear about the time and commitment you can give
- meet time and duty commitments, except in exceptional circumstances, and provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- be open and honest in your dealings with us
- treat fellow volunteers, users, partners and staff with courtesy and respect
- let us know if you wish to change the nature of your contribution
- let us know if we can improve the service and support that you receive.

## **2.3 Equal Opportunities and diversity**

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment of all staff, volunteers and job applicants and we aim to create a work environment that is free from unlawful or unfair discrimination or harassment on any grounds.

We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skill and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates including those with criminal records. In every case individuals will be treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

All volunteers will be expected to adopt Mahdlo's practices around valuing all other users and team members. Further information can be found in the staff handbook and copies of the relevant documents will be available in the staff area.

## **2.4 Data Protection**

The ways in which we store and use information about volunteers will be explained during the interview process and appropriate measures put in place to ensure confidentiality. Further information about data protection can be found in the staff handbook and Data Protection policy

# **3.0 VOLUNTEERING AT MAHDLO**

## **3.1 Recruitment & Induction**

We recognise that to ensure a diverse team, we will need to use multiple ways to recruit volunteers. This will include using local media, recruiting through partnerships including further /higher education establishments and VAO, events as well as direct neighbourhood based campaigns

We welcome anyone who wants to volunteer to complete an application but being accepted will be subject to a safer recruitment interview, references, criminal record checks and the completion of a trial period.

We reserve the right to not appoint a potential volunteer where it is felt their attitudes, values or experience are not a good fit for the organisation and/or there is insufficient organisational capacity to support their needs. Any decision not to appoint will be discussed with the youth work manager prior to contacting the applicant with feedback.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from working at Mahdlo in line with the organisation's recruitment procedures. Applicants with a criminal record will be asked to disclose details during the interview process and to provide additional details which will be presented to the CRB panel (consisting of the Chief Executive, Youth Work Manager and Volunteer Coordinator). The Youth Work Manager and Chief Executive will make the final decision on any appointments, which will be communicated to the applicant by the Volunteer Coordinator.

### **3.2 Training & Development**

All volunteers will need to attend an introductory course before starting to work at the club including knowing who their named staff contacts are and how they will be supervised. Further programmes of support will be offered in partnership with other organisations as funding allows. We will commit to regularly reviewing progress with volunteers and helping them develop the skills they need to work comfortably with young people. Volunteers will be provided with access to a Team Handbook outlining the standards expected of them and relevant policies before their first session. This will include conduct at the club, working relations and procedures for activities and sessions. We believe that sticking to the expectations outlined in the handbook are an essential starting point for any volunteer.

### **3.3 Valuing volunteers**

It's in the interest of our staff and users to ensure that volunteers feel rewarded for their contribution and included in decisions about how the organisation develops. Volunteers are actively encouraged to offer their views on policy, practice and procedures on a regular basis. They also take part in decision making at all levels of the club to ensure they feel ownership of their role and a sense of belonging.

All members of the staff team are involved in the volunteer reward scheme which aims to thank everyone as well as identifying those who go above and beyond as volunteers of the month, at our annual award ceremonies, regionally and nationally.

### **3.4 When things go wrong**

We recognise that sometimes things won't go to plan. Mahdlo's problem solving and grievance process is outlined in the Team Handbook and in the policies and procedures available in the staff break out area.

We reserve the right to not appoint or to suspend, reduce or cease to offer opportunities to individuals where we feel the activities are detrimental to the health, wellbeing, or safety of individuals, staff or users.

### **3.5 Moving On**

Volunteering with us is a non-binding agreement and a volunteer is free to stop working with us at any point. We will commit to providing exit surveys and/or interviews to mark the end of a volunteer's involvement with us and ensure that feedback can be collected and acted upon. We will provide references for volunteers where we feel we have sufficient knowledge of their skills and experience, normally after a period of three months of working at the club.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Volunteers are central to Mahdlo's vision and operations. We'd like to thank our volunteers for helping us make a difference for Oldham's children and young people.