



## Volunteer Policy

### Purpose

This policy describes the relationship between Impetus and its volunteers. Volunteers give their time and skills freely to very diverse tasks, supporting a broad range of activities. This policy sets standards to ensure that they are appropriately trained, supported and managed and to ensure that service users, volunteers, staff and the organisation as a whole benefit from this partnership.

### Scope

This policy guides the behaviour of volunteers, including trustees, when acting in a voluntary role within the organisation, and of staff supporting them.

Volunteers are defined as people who perform agreed roles within Impetus for no financial reward. It is recognised that there is a wide variety of voluntary roles, varying in formality, location and time commitment. Also there are many different types of work placements<sup>1</sup>; some have rigid requirements and carry penalties. This policy seeks to cover everyone who is engaged by Impetus, unpaid, on doing something for Impetus. People on work placements may be subject to working agreements, but if they are unpaid they will also be entitled to the provisions of this policy and its associated procedures.

### Background

At Impetus, we aim to empower local people by championing volunteering and strengthening community and voluntary organisations. Impetus and its projects or services work with volunteers, deliver services through volunteers and promote volunteering as a mutually beneficial experience for users, volunteers and the organisation.

We are committed to the implementation and promotion of good practice when working with volunteers. To that end, we have signed up to the 3R Promise<sup>2</sup> (see Appendix A) and are working towards meeting the commitments it contains.

### Context – valuing volunteers

We value the input of volunteers and aim to maintain a clear boundary between paid employees – who are essential to provide stability and continuity of services – and volunteers. We regularly review our resources and how best to deploy them to deliver our

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<sup>1</sup> A work placement is a temporary job done as part of a course of study in order to get practical training and experience.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/volunteer-rights-inquiry-3r-promise>

business plan in the most efficient way possible. In doing so, we recognise that some roles may switch between paid and volunteer opportunities as circumstances change.

In involving volunteers throughout the organisation, we aim to:

- Provide opportunities for volunteers at all levels to use a wide range of skills;
- Create opportunities for volunteers to progress and to develop their skills;
- Involve a diverse range of volunteers to give us a more representative outlook;
- Make the most of the value that volunteers add to what we do;
- Follow good practice for volunteer involvement; and
- Be flexible in the way we use volunteers as circumstances change.

### **Expectations – a reciprocal approach**

At Impetus we recognise that volunteers operate within a culture of expectation rather than obligation. We aim to agree clear expectations that reflect the hopes and intentions of both volunteers and Impetus, but recognise that such expectations are not contractually binding in any way on either side.

Whilst volunteers do not have a contract with Impetus, we consider that the following are reasonable minimum expectations for both parties to have:

#### **Volunteers will**

Perform their agreed role, adhering to the culture and approach of the service in which they are volunteering

Seek help when they need it

Keep themselves and others safe by adhering to policy and procedure

Treat others respectfully and equally, working within Impetus policies, procedures, practice and culture

Uphold the principles, standards and reputation of Impetus and act as ambassadors for Impetus

#### **Impetus will**

Give volunteers clear information about what they are here to do

Provide volunteers with someone to go to for help and support

Provide a safe environment for volunteering

Ensure that Impetus staff treat volunteers professionally, respectfully and equally

Reimburse volunteers for agreed out-of-pocket expenses

### **Policy**

At Impetus we aim to adhere to the policies set out in the following paragraphs.

## **Recruitment**

Volunteers will normally be recruited using standard recruitment methods, ensuring that:

### **Information**

- Potential volunteers are informed of what is involved in the recruitment process;
- Volunteer enquiries are responded to within 14 working days;

### **Decision-making**

- Volunteers are interviewed in line with our Equal Opportunities policy and are assessed against the skills and competencies needed for the volunteering role they are interested in.
- Accessibility requirements are assessed separately (not at interview) and will inform decision-making.
- Proof of identity and at least one reference is normally obtained for each volunteer. For certain volunteer positions, such as those involving internal committee work only, it may not be necessary to obtain a reference. Other volunteer positions, such as those involving contact with vulnerable people, may have more stringent criteria, including two references.
- Criminal record checks are undertaken where appropriate<sup>3</sup>.
- Unsuccessful applicants are offered feedback and further guidance about accessing a volunteering opportunity.

### **Information handling**

- Information about volunteers is managed securely in accordance with Impetus Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy.

### **Starting**

- Volunteers are offered a start date once all appropriate recruitment checks have been completed.

### **Induction**

Volunteers will be given information explaining the nature of the volunteering relationship between themselves and Impetus, including information about:

- Impetus, its structure and mission;
- Project or service, its structure and mission;
- Impetus Volunteer, Equalities, Confidentiality and Expenses Policies;
- Health and safety procedures and insurance cover;
- Their volunteer role, including role description;
- Project specific guidelines, including:
  - The support available to them;
  - The review period for their role; and
  - Any expectations about monitoring and evaluation associated with the role.

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<sup>3</sup> See Impetus Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy.

Induction will be followed by appropriate role and project-specific training, which may use approaches including internal/external training courses, shadowing, and peer support.

## **Review period**

To ensure that the relationship is working both for volunteers and for Impetus, we ask volunteers to review their experience after an agreed period. The length of the review period will be agreed at induction and may vary with the role. A review meeting will be held at the end of the review period so the volunteer and the person managing them can decide whether the role is meeting their needs and expectations.

## **Supervision and support**

- Staff responsible for supporting volunteers will be appropriately trained in good practice.
- Some volunteering roles are subject to formal supervision, and some not. Volunteers will be assigned a supervisor or volunteer co-ordinator and wherever possible this will be a named individual.
- Volunteers will receive support appropriate to their role; this may include 'on-task' or telephone support and/or one-to-one meetings, covering for example how the role is going, whether expectations are being met, personal welfare and development needs.
- Written notes of meetings will be agreed with individual volunteers. A copy will be given to the volunteer and a copy stored in the volunteer's personnel folder.

## **Insurance**

Impetus will ensure all volunteers are covered by appropriate insurance and volunteers will be made aware of this during their induction.

## **Expenses**

All volunteers are entitled and encouraged to claim agreed out of pocket expenses associated with their role<sup>4</sup>.

## **Wider involvement**

At Impetus, we encourage volunteer engagement and representation throughout the organisation, providing a range of opportunities for active volunteering and active involvement in decision-making processes. This includes:

- Inviting volunteers to become members of Impetus;
- Holding staff meetings that are extended to office volunteers;
- Inviting office volunteers to our annual strategy day;
- Encouraging volunteer representation on Impetus Project Steering Groups.

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<sup>4</sup> See Impetus Expenses Policy.

## **Learning opportunities**

At a minimum, we will ensure that volunteers are trained in the key skills they need for their role.

Volunteer supervisors will also promote personal development amongst volunteers using learning opportunities such as peer mentoring, role shadowing, action learning sets, attendance at community events and in-house and external training events as appropriate.

## **Employment opportunities**

At Impetus we operate an equal opportunities recruitment policy and paid roles are advertised across Impetus networks as part of an open recruitment approach. Volunteers (other than trustees) are welcome to apply for paid positions where they consider their skills and experience are suitable to the role.

Volunteers may also be supplied with an employment reference by those responsible for managing them where they have volunteered for a period agreed at induction or subsequently.

## **Monitoring outcomes**

We undertake regular activity to monitor the effectiveness of the services we deliver. This can include evaluating:

- The effect of services on service users;
- The effect of volunteering on participating volunteers; and
- Staff and volunteer opinion of Impetus as a host organisation.

Volunteers will be informed of any evaluation activities in advance, especially where they are a normal part of the volunteering role, how evaluation information will be used, and the use and storage of any identifying data.

## **Preventing problems**

Supervisors and volunteer co-ordinators can minimise problems by ensuring that they plan well for volunteer involvement and ensure volunteering has benefits for both Impetus and the volunteer. When considering the use of volunteers, supervisors should pay attention to the following:

- Know why they are involving volunteers;
- Have meaningful roles with enough activity to sustain interest;
- Take care in matching volunteers to roles – find out what the volunteer hopes to achieve to be sure that the role is appropriate;
- Create clear expectations on both sides;
- Provide any necessary training;
- Ensure that appropriate support is in place;
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to raise their views and contribute to decision making.

## **Dealing with problems**

At Impetus, we aim to make volunteering a positive experience for everyone involved. However, there are occasions when problems may arise. We have clear procedures in place for dealing with problems.

If a volunteer wishes to complain about any aspect of their volunteering that cannot be simply and informally resolved by talking to the person responsible for their support, then they should use the Complaints Procedure for Volunteers (reproduced at Appendix B).

If it comes to the attention of Impetus staff that there is a problem with a volunteer (task or behaviour related) that cannot be simply and informally resolved, the Addressing Problems with Volunteers Procedure (see Appendix C) should be used.

## **Applied Policies and Procedures**

Project specific volunteer guidelines  
Complaints Procedure for Volunteers  
Addressing Problems with Volunteers Procedure

## **Related Documents**

Expenses Policy  
Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy  
Data Protection Policy  
Confidentiality Policy

**Date Approved by Board: 28th May 2013**

**Review Date: June 2016**

## Appendix A – The 3R Promise

The 3R promise was initiated by Volunteering England after an inquiry into volunteer rights was set up in November 2009. The inquiry followed a number of reports of serious breaches of trust between volunteers and the organisations they volunteered for, which led some volunteers to call for an external means of complaints redress and defined volunteer rights.

Although Volunteering England recognised the efforts made by many organisations to improve volunteers' experience, it asked all organisations which use volunteers to sign up to the '3R promise', set out below, in order to raise standards of volunteer management. By signing up to the 3R promise, Impetus made a commitment to meet each of the criteria it contains.

### 3R Promise

We will endeavour to get it **RIGHT** from the beginning

- Our organisation will follow guidance on good practice and ensure it has up to date policies and evidence this in appropriate reports;
- Our organisation will ensure that concerns of volunteers are listened to and given due consideration.

We will offer means to achieve **RECONCILIATION** if things go wrong

- Our organisation recognises that sometimes things go wrong and makes sure that everyone in the organisation knows how to deal with it;
- Our organisation will identify a trustee with responsibility for volunteering who will monitor volunteer complaints and encourage rapid resolution in emerging conflicts;
- Our organisation will explore local mediation services when necessary.

We accept our **RESPONSIBILITY**

- Our organisation explains and accepts its responsibility for its volunteers and their well-being and respects their wish to always have a fair hearing if a conflict arises;
- Our organisation will work with the Call to Action Progress Group to share lessons and improve standards;
- Our organisation will report publicly on the implementation of its 3R promise.

## **Appendix B - Complaints Procedure for Volunteers**

### **Purpose**

Impetus recognises that from time to time problems may arise which cause a volunteer to feel aggrieved. For example, a volunteer may have concerns about his/her role or an internal procedure, about the management of volunteers or the organisation, or may feel s/he is being harassed or treated unfairly.

This procedure tells volunteers how to take up these problems in the form of a complaint.

We aim to resolve any complaints openly, fairly and quickly in order to:

- Protect the person making the complaint;
- Resolve the issue;
- Minimise any risk of disruption to staff, service users and other volunteers;
- Demonstrate that we value volunteers throughout the organisation; and
- Ensure that Impetus, its staff and volunteers learn and develop from these experiences.

The procedure has three stages.

### **1. Informal Complaint**

You should make a verbal complaint to your supervisor or your volunteer co-ordinator. If your complaint is about this person and you feel it cannot be made directly to him or her then you should make it to another manager. In this instance, the person concerned may also opt to pass the complaint to their line manager or another staff member.

The person you make the complaint to will discuss how you would like the problem resolved and agree and record a plan of action. For example, the person to whom you complained may tell the person causing offence that their behaviour is unwelcome and propose action to prevent or review it, or they may offer mediation.

Once action has been taken, the person dealing with your complaint will ask you if the cause of your complaint has ceased. If you are satisfied that the issue has been resolved, the informal complaint procedure will be finished and a record of this noted. If you feel that the problem has not been resolved, you may start the Formal Complaint Procedure

### **2. Formal Complaint Procedure - Written Complaint**

If you feel the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved, you should write to the CEO explaining the nature of your complaint. If your complaint was with the CEO, or heard by the CEO, you should write to the Chair of the Board, who may ask a Project Leader to look at your complaint. If you need help to write a formal complaint letter, you may ask the person dealing with your complaint to get you help from someone suitable outside the organisation. The person dealing with your complaint will make every effort to arrange this for you.



A formal meeting will be arranged within 14 working days of receipt of your complaint. The meeting will be at a time and place convenient to everyone involved and you are encouraged to make every effort to attend. You will be allowed to explain your complaint and how you think it should be resolved. The meeting may be adjourned to allow an investigation to take place.

You will be allowed to have a companion with you at the meeting. Your companion will be allowed to address the meeting to put and sum up your case, respond on your behalf to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with you during the meeting.

Following the meeting you will be informed of the decision in writing as soon as possible, normally within 10 working days. This will include any action the person appointed to resolve your complaint intends to take. Also, you will receive a copy of the meeting records/minutes. You have the right to appeal against the decision.

### **3. Appeal**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you may write to the Chair of the Board, within 10 working days of receipt of the decision, explaining your concerns.

The Chair will set up a meeting with a panel comprising two Board members including one member of the Personnel Sub Committee. Panel members will not have been involved in the earlier meetings. The panel will hear the complaint as soon as possible after the receipt of your request, normally within 14 working days.

You will be allowed to have a companion with you at the meeting. Your companion will be allowed to address the meeting, to put forth and sum up your case, to respond on your behalf to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with you during the meeting.

The panel will then decide on how the matter will be resolved and convey that decision to you within 10 working days of the meeting. The decision of the panel will be final. You will receive a copy of the meeting records/minutes.

### **Records**

The following will be kept in your volunteer personnel file:

#### **Informal Procedure**

- Notes relating to the informal complaint, action that was taken and any outcomes.

#### **Formal Procedure**

- Your letter to the CEO outlining the nature of your complaint.
- The notes from the complaint meeting showing the decisions, any actions and the reasons for such actions.
- A copy of the letter sent to you.
- Your letter appealing against the decision.
- Notes from the appeal meeting showing the outcome(s).
- Any subsequent outcomes.
- A copy of the letter sent to you.

## **Appendix C - Addressing problems with volunteers**

### **Purpose**

This procedure sets out action which will be taken by Impetus in the event of misconduct, unacceptable behaviour or persistent unsatisfactory performance by a volunteer.

Unacceptable behaviour may include:

- Operating outside policies, procedures and agreed operational culture and values;
- Persistent bad time keeping;
- Going beyond the boundaries of the agreed role;
- Not respecting service users' confidentiality/dignity/independence and individuality;
- Breach of health and safety regulations or agreements;
- Misuse of the organisation's equipment or facilities;
- Theft or dishonesty;
- Discrimination on grounds of disability/ethnicity/religion/gender/sexuality/age;
- Abuse or other offensive behaviour;
- Arriving for volunteering under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse.

Many issues such as not fitting in as well as expected with the team or being unreliable should be picked up and dealt with during supervision. It may be possible to resolve these without resorting to formal procedures.

### **1. Informal Action**

Your supervisor or volunteer co-ordinator will raise his/her concerns in an informal, confidential meeting. You will be given the chance to explain any personal or work issues that may be affecting your behaviour and performance. This may include:

- Any training needs you may have;
- Whether you need extra support or supervision;
- Whether you are unfulfilled in your current role, your needs have changed, or you would like to use different skills to help the organisation;
- Whether you are unable to cope with the demands of your role anymore, you need a break from volunteering or would like to volunteer elsewhere for a while.

The meeting will emphasise finding ways to help you improve and sustain your improvement. You will receive written details of how your performance and conduct will be reviewed and over what period. You will also receive a copy of the meeting records/minutes.

### **2. Formal Action**

If the issue is not resolved by informal action, you will receive a written warning from your supervisor or volunteer co-ordinator outlining the nature of the on-going concerns. The letter will contain sufficient information about your alleged misconduct or poor performance and its possible consequences to enable you to prepare to answer the case at a meeting.

The meeting will be held within 14 working days of the written warning being sent. You will be allowed to state your case, which could be to your supervisor, volunteer co-ordinator or a senior member of staff. You can be accompanied by a person of your choice.

After the meeting, your supervisor, volunteer co-ordinator or senior member of staff will decide what action will be taken. You will be informed of this decision in writing. The letter will set out the nature of the misconduct or poor performance and the change in behaviour and performance required with a timescale. Depending on the nature of the concerns, further objectives could be set and help offered to you. A decision to end your volunteering role will be a last resort.

### **3. Appeal**

If you feel that the formal action taken is wrong or unjust you may appeal against the action. You must notify the Chair of the Board of the grounds for your appeal in writing within 14 working days. The Chair will respond within 10 working days.

An appeal meeting will be held at an agreed time and place. You have the right to be accompanied at the appeal. The appeal meeting will be held by a member of the Board.

You will be informed of the decision in writing within 10 working days and receive a copy of the minutes of the meeting. That decision will be final.

### **Suspension**

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, alleged acts that constitute gross misconduct, such as:

- 'Abuse' and / or inappropriate behaviour relating to vulnerable groups;
- Theft;
- Assault or acts of violence;
- Malicious damage;
- Deliberate falsification of documents;
- Harassment; and
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.