



Volunteer Learning and Development Policy

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1. GROUP HUG - VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

1.1 Our Vision

To offer a free service to adults in the United Kingdom, we accept donations and sponsorships and invest our surpluses to keep the service free and allow it to be powered by volunteers.

1.2 Our Mission

- We offer an alternative chat service for immediate access to anyone wishing to talk to someone who needs to free their mind.
- We aim to grow this social concept country wide, giving users of Group Hug the ability to chat to someone in private, confidential and safe surroundings.
- We aim to provide an echo system to those volunteering to make their roles easy to carry out.
- We aim to help 100,000 people in the first 2 years.

1.3 Our Values

- We offer a service which meets the users' demands whilst keeping privacy and confidentiality safe.
- We safeguard those who are in need on a case-by-case basis.
- We allow anyone to use our chat service whilst we listen and signpost to professional care.
- We encourage everyone's contribution and collaborate to make the roles easier.
- We achieve excellence through personal commitment and ongoing improvement.
- We respect and respond to people's diverse needs, backgrounds and views.
- We achieve our aims through building open and transparent relationships.

2. OUR COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERING

Group Hug's Principles of Volunteering sets out key expectations of how volunteering takes place in the Social Enterprise hereby referred to as Group Hug. These include several key principles that impact on how recruitment and selection take place.

- Autonomy within boundaries
- Collaboration and sharing
- Volunteer-friendly communication
- Recognising differing motivations to volunteer
- Diversity
- Supportive
- Making use of volunteer skills
- Opportunity to learn and develop
- Support of flexible time commitments
- Valuing Volunteers' contributions

3. INTRODUCTION

Learning is an essential part of the Group Hug's activity. Effective learning ensures that we deliver services to people affected by a range of conditions; physical, mental and psychological in the most knowledgeable, skilled and approachable manner. Learning enables us to keep up to date with the latest developments and adapt to changes in technology and society, avoiding risks and capitalising on opportunities to the ultimate benefit of people affected by these conditions.

All volunteers will be given reasonable access to the learning required to assist them in performing their voluntary role(s) to the best of their ability and to meet the needs of Group Hug and people, family and friends affected by these conditions.

4. ACCESSIBILITY TO LEARNING

Learning and development should where practicable, be flexible to meet the needs and lifestyle of volunteers whilst ensuring learning is achieved to meet any standard required for each role.



Group Hug recognises people learn in many different ways and as such learning needs to be accessed in a variety of manners, such as through classroom learning, e-learning, reading sessions or practising skills. Within the resources of Group Hug, we will try to ensure this variety of flexible learning.

Learning should be accessible to all based on their needs to carry out their roles. We recognise individuals have different needs to enable them to learn. So, we will carefully consider reasonable adjustments which may help volunteers access the learning they require. For example, we will anticipate and provide large print or braille learning materials for visually impaired volunteers. We will ensure venues are accessible for wheelchairs (if face to face training is required).

We will provide formal training at a range of times and days to accommodate peoples' lifestyles and most importantly, we will ask volunteers questions which help us anticipate their needs.

5. RECOGNISING PRIOR LEARNING AND SKILLS

Group Hug recognises that volunteers join us or take on new roles already equipped with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience. We seek to recognise these skills where practical and not expect volunteers to attend learning for skills they already possess.

Furthermore, we will seek, with individual volunteers' permission to make good use of these pre-existing skills and knowledge in the development of learning and development of Group Hug.

6. CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Learning is an ongoing process, not a one-off event. We are most effective when we take the opportunities to continuously learn and improve. We will do this through inductions, initial training, and ongoing learning events and by individual reflection on how effective we are at what we do.

We recognise much is learning by failure and mistakes. Therefore, when we make mistakes, we will take the opportunity to learn from the experience and therefore improve performance when faced with similar experiences in the future.

We recognise shared learning is a highly effective and efficient way to improve overall Group Hug effectiveness in helping people affected by a range of conditions we offer support with.



We recognise learning is the responsibility of all volunteers and of the individual learner. Learning is not just something that happens in a classroom but is an ongoing process which requires focus throughout the delivery of the volunteer role.

We recognise some volunteers support comes typically, from other volunteers. We therefore will seek to ensure branches and groups receive adequate information, guidance and support to allow them to continually learn. This may be through local inductions, development of branch groups or through provision of clear written literature.

7. LOGISTICS OF LEARNING

7.1 Learning Environment

Learning is more effective when it happens in a comfortable environment. Therefore, where practical, effort will be made to ensure that the physical environment for training events are comfortable and accessible. Effort will be made to ensure learners have a relaxed and fun environment in which to learn and if practical, time and space to reflect on learning.

We recognise not all training is best delivered by staff, and we will involve volunteers in their delivery of training, buddying, coaching and mentoring.

7.2 Evaluation

Where practical, we will evaluate the effectiveness of learning, both formal and informal. This will include not just an assessment of the learning event and the skills learnt on that day, but of the on-going application and use of the skills and knowledge learned.

Appropriate records will be kept electronically of key learning attainments associated to the learning outcomes of key roles.

7.3 Record Keeping

The Group Level or System Level Managers responsible for the volunteer should arrange for the volunteer's record on Group Hug to be updated with all learning undertaken and required.

8. ROLE SPECIFIC LEARNING

Some roles require specific skills and knowledge to allow volunteers to take on the responsibility. These skills and knowledge are set out in the learning outcomes associated with each relevant role.



GROUP HUG

A social concept, powered by volunteers, here to free your mind

Volunteers will normally be expected to articulate or demonstrate attainment and capacity of these learning outcomes prior to taking on the roles.

Some roles such as a Supervisor or Manager require volunteers to be signed off as competent before taking on a role. Others may allow for competency to be slowly developed whilst practicing the role.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

This Policy shall be deemed effective as of 16th May 2021. No part of this Policy shall have retroactive effect and shall thus apply only to matters occurring on or after this date.