

Linlithgow Link Volunteer Policy

1 MISSION STATEMENT

We aim to provide a voluntary service to promote the concept of a more caring community, particularly within Linlithgow by:

- Providing a visiting and car service as voluntary back up support to the statutory caring services
- Providing support for all identified sectors of the community, particularly the elderly infirm, in the form of social or community activity
- Addressing need on an individual basis
- Raising awareness of the needs of these sectors of the community
- Promoting and publicising Link and the contribution it makes to the community
- At all times, working in partnership with Linkers, and the statutory and voluntary agencies

Linlithgow Link Befriending Service aims to provide companionship & support to vulnerable people living in Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge. Our volunteers work alongside service users to encourage social & community involvement.

We recognise that volunteers are essential to the achievement of our mission. Volunteers have an important and valuable contribution to make to the people who use our service, our organisation and the community in which we live because:

- involving volunteers enables us to provide a flexible, person-centred approach to the people who use our service

- the wide range of skills, background and experience volunteers bring enables us to offer a fulfilling service that would be impossible otherwise.
- increased awareness of Linlithgow Link and our mission can best be achieved by actively involving members of the community for the benefit of the whole community

We believe that our relationship with volunteers should be one of mutual responsibility and commitment.

Principles

Our volunteering policy is underpinned by the following principles;

Linlithgow Link aims to ensure that barriers to volunteer involvement are recognised and where possible removed. Equality of access is our first priority in the recruitment, selection, training and support of our volunteers.

Linlithgow Link is committed to the continued involvement of volunteers within our organisation. We will actively promote the importance of volunteering and attempt to increase the number and variety of volunteering opportunities available. We expect staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, involve them in their work. We will not use volunteers to replace paid staff.

Linlithgow Link recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development. We aim to help volunteers meet these needs and provide training and support for them to do their work effectively. We will set up and use appropriate channels for consulting with our volunteers on the issues and decisions that affect them in their contribution to Linlithgow Link.

Linlithgow Link believes that volunteer involvement within our organisation must be effectively managed.

We will ensure that this volunteer policy is adopted and informs and supports other Linlithgow Link policies and strategies and ensure that they do not adversely affect our volunteers.

Linlithgow Link Management Committee will guide and monitor the implementation and on-going review of this policy.

Practice Guidelines

The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers within Linlithgow Link.

Recruitment

All potential volunteers will be interviewed. This will let us find out a bit about them, their skills and what they would like to do. It will also let them find out about Linlithgow Link and the kind of opportunities we have for volunteers. A decision can then be made by both parties about whether to proceed with the application or not. All Linlithgow Link volunteers must provide two satisfactory references.

As part of the recruitment process, volunteers will be required, where appropriate, to become members of or update their membership of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. Any disclosure information received will be held in accordance with our Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Disclosure Information Policy.

A previous conviction will not necessarily be a barrier to volunteering and any information will be treated in accordance with our Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

Linlithgow Link has a legal obligation under the Data Protection Act to ensure that all personal information held and processed complies with the principles of the Act. Information regarding volunteers will be used to inform Linlithgow Link's work and for anonymous statistics only. Volunteers may see a copy of their own records.

Support

We will provide all volunteers with initial training before being placed. (This will normally be group training but we recognise that it may on occasion take place on a 1:1 basis with a member of staff.) Opportunities to participate in further relevant training will also be available to all volunteers.

All volunteers will have a named person as their main point of contact. This named person will provide regular support and feedback regarding the volunteer's role within Linlithgow Link.

The Volunteer's Voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning Linlithgow Link and its work. We will strive to identify innovative, practical ways for this to happen.

Expenses

All volunteers will have their travel and other out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed. Link staff will provide clear information regarding expenses that can be claimed and how to make a claim. Link drivers should reclaim their car service costs directly from the service user. The process and applicable rates will be explained prior to undertaking any car services on behalf of Link.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Linlithgow Link's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on Linlithgow Link's behalf. Volunteers who use their own car as part of volunteering (not simply to get between home and the place of volunteering) *must* notify their insurance company. A sample letter for volunteers is available on request.

Health and Safety

Volunteers are covered by Linlithgow Link's Health and Safety policy.

Equality

Whilst ensuring that volunteering with Linlithgow Link is open to all, Link will also ensure that roles are appropriate and compatible with the skills of the volunteer. Specific roles may have specific requirements.

Linlithgow Link operates an Equalities policy. Volunteers will work in accordance with this policy which applies across the spectrum on discrimination, equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations in respect of age, disability, ethnicity, race, colour, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of and commitment to our equalities policy.

Problem Solving

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage and have drawn up a procedure to deal with any complaints or grievances.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Link Co-ordinators will systematically monitor and evaluate its use of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy.