



Mary Frances Trust Volunteer Policy

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1. Introduction

Mary Frances Trust (MFT), including its staff and trustees, recognises the significant and valuable role volunteers play within the charity, helping it achieve its vision and mission, which it could not realise without their additional support and hard work. MFT are indebted to them for that support and see our relationship with them as two-way. We encourage new volunteers, helping develop each individual where appropriate throughout their volunteering journey by operating a person-centred approach. We acknowledge a volunteer should get something back from their involvement (it's not just about them giving) so in return, we will ensure our volunteers have a safe, rewarding and enjoyable experience. Volunteers can learn from our team whilst being supported, helping them in their personal development, by improving confidence, self-esteem and helping them learn new skills.

This policy reflects our commitment to volunteering and sets out a framework of procedures and best practice, which we will endeavour to follow when recruiting and working with volunteers, to ensure that both parties' expectations are met. This policy is for volunteers recruited by MFT and for staff / colleagues working with those who volunteer with us. It will be provided to all new volunteers at the time of their induction.

2. MFT Volunteer Definition

An MFT volunteer is someone who supports and complements our work, who is unpaid and gives their time freely and of their own free will (not coerced). The arrangement is voluntary on both sides, and we accept that a volunteer may leave at any time. The charity's relationship with volunteers is based on trust and is not intended to create legal relations (contract) or obligations associated with employment. We request our volunteers to demonstrate and reflect the core values and policies of MFT when volunteering with us, especially around safeguarding, the safety and wellbeing of the people we support.

3. Recruitment of Volunteers

MFT seeks to attract volunteers with appropriate attributes, enthusiasm and attitude which is conducive to MFT values, the specific role and to working within our clients.

Before a volunteer opportunity is advertised, a role description should be prepared by the Volunteer Co-Ordinator and agreed (signed off) by the Team Manager. The role description should accurately reflect the core elements of the role. Where a role description already exists for a particular volunteer opportunity, then it should be reviewed to ensure that it still accurately describes the role and updated where necessary.

MFT will collect information on all prospective volunteers during the recruitment process including relevant volunteer aspirations, expectations, skills, experience etc, an application form, Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) check where relevant and a reference. Prospective volunteers will be asked to read, sign, and agree to our Volunteer Agreement prior to them being able to start volunteering and to complete our online Volunteer Induction Training within 21 days of it being sent to them. The Volunteer Agreement outlines what is expected of our volunteers and what they can expect from us in return and what to do if things go wrong. Where a prospective volunteer cannot agree to the aims, values, and relevant policies of MFT or agree to complete the online Induction Training, then their application will be terminated. Our Volunteer Agreement does not and is not intended to create a contract of employment between the volunteer and MFT.

All volunteers will be assigned a named contact for their role, who will lead on 'operational 'matters, supporting, guiding and supervising the volunteer. We recognise that some volunteers will carry out more than one role therefore they will have individual contacts for each opportunity. The Volunteer Co-ordinator is ultimately responsible for maintaining and managing the volunteer relationship, and both the volunteer or member of staff / facilitator managing a role can contact them at any time with updates, especially if things aren't running smoothly, or there is a particular issue which needs resolving.

4. Break Between Service Use and Volunteering

To ensure appropriate boundaries, safeguard confidentiality, and support the wellbeing of both clients and volunteers, MFT requires a clear break between the time an individual ceases to receive services and the time they can apply to become a volunteer with us.

Individuals who have been clients of MFT must wait a minimum of six months after the end of receiving services before applying to volunteer.

This period allows for reflection, adjustment, and ensures that any potential conflicts of interest or blurred boundaries between the client and volunteer roles are avoided.

-Applications from former clients will be considered on a case-by-case basis, which may include a risk assessment being undertaken by MFT, dependent on someone's previous history with us and their current medical situation. We will also take into account the volunteer role being applied for.

MFT reserves the right to extend this break period where appropriate, to safeguard both the individual and the integrity of the service.

5. Volunteer Application Process

Volunteering for MFT is a simple five-step process:

1. Initial discussion with the prospective volunteer to determine their reasons for volunteering, their needs and mutual suitability to the role.
2. If considered suitable, complete an application form.
3. Obtain two satisfactory references.
4. Complete a DBS check.
5. Ask applicant to sign a volunteer agreement.

MFT acknowledge that there are some circumstances where it is not possible to obtain two references. Where it is so, MFT will take a view regarding the application, on a case-by-case basis.

Once the appropriate checks have been received, and a Volunteer Agreement signed, the individual will be considered an MFT Volunteer, their name entered onto the volunteer list, and considered available for suitable roles. Their progress will be reviewed periodically as part of the onboarding process with regular reviews as part of their volunteering journey. MFT reserves the right to terminate an application at any time, for any reason.

6. Volunteer Role Description

A role description will be issued to all volunteers when discussing or allocating a role with them. It will cover all of the following:

- About Mary Frances Trust – What it is, its services and geographical areas
- How the volunteer can help – Nature of the role and what’s involved.
- Key Points – Time, dates, location, regularity, and duration of volunteering role.
- Benefits the volunteer will receive
- Qualities we are looking for to match that particular role

7. Equality & Diversity

MFT is committed to inclusion, building a diverse and equitable organisation that reflects society and the clients it supports. The organisation’s Equality & Diversity Statement applies to all recruitment and must be complied with at every stage of the recruitment process. This means that prospective applicants for volunteer positions should not be discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, cultural or religious beliefs, disability, and age. We will ensure all volunteers are treated fairly and in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Statement. MFT will not condone, accept, or ignore any forms of discrimination or unacceptable behaviour, whether unfortunate or deliberate. We reserve the right to:

1. Act positively (educate / retrain) with any volunteer who discriminates, where their behaviour is unfortunate.
2. Terminate their role within the organisation if their behaviour is deliberate.

8. Safeguarding

MFT is committed to safeguarding all those who interact with the charity, whether that be clients we support, our staff, Trustees, or volunteers. Volunteers will be shown our safeguarding policy as part of the induction or onboarding process and be asked to uphold best practice whilst acting on the charity’s behalf by avoiding placing themselves in risky situations where their actions may be misinterpreted. Any safeguarding breach will be investigated and taken seriously. In such circumstances, a volunteer may be asked to step back from their role temporarily or permanently.

Part of MFT’s role to safeguard the organisation and clients it supports, is to seek references on all new staff and volunteers and carry out a DBS check (with a 3 yearly update where appropriate). We encourage volunteer applications from a variety of backgrounds which may include someone having a criminal record. This will not necessarily bar them from applying to volunteer with the charity, depending on the nature, circumstances, and background of their offence.

9. Interacting with clients (outside of sessions)

Volunteers may live and work in the same communities as the clients they support. This can be geographically and virtually (online). Volunteers must ensure that they DO NOT share private and personal contact details with clients or their families whom they do not already have a personal relationship with. This includes social media profiles and gamertags or their equivalent. A clear line needs to be understood by client volunteers (internal volunteers) about personal and professional boundaries, and the relationship between them, MFT and its clients when volunteering and when they are not. It is MFT policy not to use volunteers in the same service as they have been recently receiving support due to a conflict of interest and potentially managing existing relationships.

Care should be taken to ensure all interactions with clients away from MFT services / sessions should be managed in as professional a manner as possible. This could include considering familial and friendship relationships and be aware of the interaction of social circles.

10. Training and Support

To ensure volunteers are appropriately equipped to carry out their role, MFT will provide an induction and induction pack, including an overview of the organisation, what is mental health, general guidelines for working with clients, safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, managing personal & professional boundaries etc. Additional training can only be offered where it supports the volunteering role.

MFT will:

- Keep volunteers informed of training / support opportunities that could be of help in relation to voluntary work and their personal development.
- Arrange appropriate pre- and post-session meetings where appropriate for volunteer briefings and debriefings, to enable them to prepare for activities and discuss any concerns and successes.
- Offer one-to-one feedback sessions for those who would like them, to give the chance to reflect on their voluntary contribution. This can help develop their role and their personal aims.
- Thank volunteers and recognise their voluntary contribution. MFT will provide periodic 'thank you' events, references, feedback sessions, and reports for volunteers for academic or work purposes. It is our policy not to offer a reference for anyone who hasn't consistently volunteered for us for at least six months.

11. Health and Safety

Volunteers must take care of themselves and others whilst volunteering with the charity and follow all health and safety advice / instruction given for their role.

Volunteers should:

1. Comply with all health and safety matters
2. Report any health and safety incidents, accidents or near misses
3. Not intentionally or recklessly damage, interfere with or misuse equipment, or anything provided for health, safety, and welfare

MFT will:

1. Ensure volunteers are carrying out their role in a safe environment. Risk assessments are carried out for all activities and volunteers should be informed of relevant elements that may impact on service delivery and possible safety.
2. Ensure volunteers are covered by the charity's Public Liability Insurance. This cover does not extend to property belonging to volunteers so personal items should always be kept with them or locked away.

12. Data Protection and Confidentiality

MFT will comply with all legislation (GDPR) that protects volunteer information / data. It will be held securely and confidentially, only sharing access with relevant authorised people within the organisation. This information will not be accessed by others outside the charity (we may be required to share certain information with external authorities should there be a serious incident).

Volunteers may become party to confidential information about certain individuals (clients and their familial situation). Volunteers are expected to maintain that confidentiality and not to disclose any of that information externally unless the charity asks them to do so by complying with an external investigation.

13. Intellectual Property and Copyright

When signing the Volunteer Agreement, volunteers are agreeing to assign copyright to any creative material (intellectual property) created by them in their role as volunteer (whether alone or with any other person) in the course of their duties. Such original design (whether registerable or not) or other work in which copyright may subsist, volunteers agree that they are acting as the agent or nominee of MFT and that the rights in relation to any such design or other work shall vest in and become the property of the charity. Any material created elsewhere by the volunteer, which they use to assist our work for a limited purpose / time period, will be considered as their property.

14. Use of Images

We ask volunteers not to take any photographs or videos of our clients or services without express permission from us. MFT may from time to time take photographs or small video clips to publicise our work on our website, social media channels, publications, and newsletter. We would never knowingly use an image or video without a volunteer's prior consent. Such material will never be used for anything which may be viewed as negative in tone, or that may cause offence, embarrassment, or distress.

The Volunteer Agreement includes a section regarding consent to images with a tick box element allowing volunteers to notify us of their agreement / denial. A record of this will be held by the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

15. Reimbursement of Expenses

MFT is grateful to its volunteers who do not claim expenses however, any reimburse of out-of-pocket expenses, payable by the charity will be made in accordance with its expenses policy at a maximum of £7 per activity (2023 value). Reimbursement may not be paid without valid receipts. No payment, other than the reimbursement of agreed out-of-pocket expenses, will be given.

16. Leaving the Charity

Volunteers can bring their volunteering to a close with the charity at any time by speaking with or writing to the Volunteer Co-ordinator or named contact. MFT requests as much notice from the volunteer as possible in order to make alternative arrangements for cover.

MFT may offer an exit interview to monitor:

1. Whether their volunteering experience has been a good one
2. If their expectations were met
3. Any negative reason why a volunteer may be leaving

4. Any learning for the charity

There may be occasions where a volunteer is asked to cease volunteering with the charity. This may be because a role naturally comes to an end, or the volunteer is no longer able to carry out their role to a satisfactory level. In such circumstances, MFT will endeavour to give as much notice as possible to the volunteer. Whatever the situation, the volunteer will be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

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