



**Fighting for hope for  
homeless people**

# **Volunteer Policy**

**Updated February 2007**

**This Policy exists to clarify how and why Crisis  
involves volunteers in its work**

# Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Objectives of the Policy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Why Crisis involves volunteers in its work</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Equal Opportunities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Roles &amp; Opportunities at Crisis</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1	Who can volunteer at Crisis	3
4.2	Staff and Volunteers	3
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recruitment &amp; Selection</b>	<b>4</b>
5.1	Application Procedure	4
5.2	Interviews	4
5.3	References	4
5.4	Role Description	4
5.5	Volunteer Agreement	4
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Induction &amp; involvement of new volunteers</b>	<b>4</b>
6.1	Induction	4
6.2	Volunteer Handbook	5
6.3	Training	5
6.4	The Volunteers Voice	5
6.5	Volunteer Expenses	5
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Support, Supervision and Evaluation</b>	<b>5</b>
7.1	Support & Supervision	5
7.2	Absence/ Illness	5
7.3	Communication	6
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>6</b>
8.1	Complaints about Crisis staff	6
8.2	Complaints about other Crisis volunteer	6
8.3	Disciplinary Procedures	6
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Leaving Procedure</b>	<b>7</b>
9.1	Notifying your supervisor	7
9.2	Exit Interview	7
9.3	References	7
<b>10.</b>	<b>Volunteer Policy Monitoring</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1.0 Objectives of the Policy

Volunteers give their time freely to Crisis and in return they have the right to be recognised for the work that they do, and have involvement and participation throughout the organisation as appropriate. We believe, therefore, that it is important that a set of principles are established relating to Crisis commitment to volunteers, striving to ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly and equally.

By means of this policy we hope that volunteers volunteering at Crisis will feel that they are treated respectfully and professionally and that their needs are fully considered.

## 2.0 Why Crisis involves volunteers in its work

- Crisis started as a volunteer – led organisation, therefore we recognise the huge contribution that volunteers can make to a particular Charity.
- We recognize that without volunteers Crisis would be unable to run many of its services
- Volunteers are an integral part of Crisis and contribute in many ways towards achieving the mission and values of the Charity.
- Volunteers bring individual varied experiences, skills and expertise which are invaluable to Crisis
- Volunteers extend and enhance the services offered to guests & members of Crisis

## 3.0 Equal Opportunities/ Diversity

Crisis strives to be more representative of our wider society and welcome new ideas and fresh approaches generated by people from different backgrounds, cultures, genders, ages and outlooks.

We recognize that there are ex-offenders, people with disabilities and people from BME groups, despite wanting to volunteer, are faced with obstacles to volunteering. Crisis will overcome as many of these obstacles as it can, so that all people can be involved.

## 4.0 Roles & Opportunities at Crisis

### 4.1 Who can volunteer at Crisis?

Crisis welcomes anyone who wishes to volunteer for any reason, on the understanding that it is an activity that is undertaken freely and by choice with no concern for financial gain, and that the volunteer has the skills needed for the role. The work carried out by a volunteer will be specifically described in a role description.

### 4.2 Staff and Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of Crisis and help us to offer our high level of service.

Crisis strives to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities in many areas and levels, including at Trustee level. We will treat volunteers with the same equality of opportunity, respect and fairness as staff.

## **5.0 Recruitment & Selection**

### **5.1 Application Procedure**

The application procedure is designed to help both the organisation and the volunteer find out whether the placement at Crisis is right for the volunteer by enabling an exchange of information. The organisation provides information about the organisation and volunteering opportunities to enable the volunteer to make a decision as to whether they want to volunteer with us. The volunteer provides information about their needs, aims and motivations, as well as existing skills and experiences, to enable Crisis to make a decision as to whether a suitable placement can be provided.

### **5.2 Interviews**

Potential Crisis volunteers will be given an interview by the line manager and Volunteer Manager/ Executive to enable us to find out the suitability for a particular role. If volunteer is not suitable Volunteering Team will look at alternative roles within the organisation.

Crisis runs an inclusive volunteering programme. We will make exceptions for people that do not have any referees (new arrivals to the country, etc).

### **5.3 References**

Potential volunteers are asked to supply details of two referees whom Crisis can approach for references. Ideally they should not be family members and should be people whom the volunteer has known for at least six months

### **5.4 Role Description**

All Crisis volunteer roles should be meaningful and worthwhile. The tasks of each role will be detailed in a role description, which is agreed with the volunteer before they commence their voluntary placement. The role description lists in detail the tasks that the volunteer will be required to undertake.

### **5.5 Volunteer Agreement**

Volunteers are asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement establishing what voluntary work they agree to do for Crisis and what Crisis undertakes to provide for them. The document in no way implies a real or perceived legally binding contract of employment.

## **6.0 Induction & Involvement of new volunteers**

### **6.1 Induction**

Volunteers receive a full induction to their voluntary role at Crisis. This includes an induction to relevant staff and volunteers, a tour of the building, and introduction to the systems and workings of the organisation, reading of Crisis ' key policies. Volunteers will also be introduced to the role and shown what tasks they will be expected to undertake.

## **6.2 Volunteer Handbook**

Every volunteer will receive a copy of the Volunteer Handbook when they start volunteering at Crisis. The book gives details about all the services provided by the organisation and guidelines about volunteering.

## **6.3 Training**

Training is provided for volunteers, by supervisors and experienced volunteers, to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Depending on their role volunteers are offered either ongoing on the job training or group training such as "Homelessness Awareness". We fully support the development of all volunteers.

## **6.4 The Volunteer's Voice**

Volunteers are actively encouraged to express their views and matters concerning Crisis and its work through team meetings, team strategy days, etc, as well as through informal channels. We strive to encourage this because we believe that the volunteers may have more independent view points than staff, and may more accurately reflect the local community in terms of race, ethnicity, age, social class, etc and we wish Crisis to benefit from as many varied and diverse viewpoints, representative of the local community, as possible.

## **6.5 Volunteer Expenses**

As a Volunteer Involving Organisation we are committed to ensuring that volunteers are not left out of pocket for volunteering with Crisis. Therefore we will reimburse travel and lunch expenses according to the guidelines listed below:

Travel: Reimburse out of pocket expenses spent traveling to your volunteering placement and back home covering Zone 1 – 6. More detailed guidelines can be found in the Expenses Policy.

Lunch: Up to £4 reimbursed if volunteering more than four hours per day.

The above does not apply to Crisis Open Christmas where we are unable to reimburse expenses due to the huge number of people (6500 +) that volunteer.

## **7.0 Support, Supervision and Evaluation**

### **7.1 Support & Supervision**

It is the intention of Crisis to support its volunteers to enable them to carry out their tasks to the best of their ability. Volunteers, like staff, are entitled to line management, supervision and support. Volunteers are accountable to a named person from whom they can expect support and supervision. Supervision sessions are carried out in a supportive and encouraging environment and are held on a regular basis, according to how much time is spent volunteering.

### **7.2 Absence/ Illness**

Crisis acknowledges that volunteers are performing a valuable role within the organisation and hence are relied upon by staff to fulfill their agreed duties at stated times. Volunteers need to understand that if they are unable to turn up or expect to be late for their shift it is important that

they inform their supervisor as soon as possible. We also appreciate advance notice in respect of holidays and days off.

### **7.3 Communication**

In order to involve volunteers as fully as possible, Crisis is committed to keeping volunteers informed about the activities of the organization and facilitating volunteers input and comments. This will demonstrate the value and significance placed upon volunteers and their work.

## **8.0 Problem Solving**

Crisis has a complaints procedure as although we always aim to provide services in an accessible and professional manner we recognize that there might be times when volunteers feel less than satisfied with our performance. We have a complaints procedure to give volunteers the opportunity to express their concerns and provide the organization with feedback to improve our service delivery.

### **8.1 Complaint about Crisis staff**

If a volunteer has a complaint about a Crisis member of staff that they feel cannot be resolved informally then there is a Grievance Procedure for formal complaints. Full details on this procedure and for information on how to complain you should contact HR for the 'Grievance Procedure'.

### **8.2 Complaint about other Crisis volunteer**

If a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer that they feel cannot be resolved informally then they should write to: Volunteer Manager, Crisis, 66 Commercial Street, London, E1 6LT.

### **8.3 Disciplinary Procedure**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the boundaries and procedures of Crisis or who fail to perform their voluntary role (as described in opportunity role description) satisfactorily are subject to disciplinary procedures.

Volunteers can expect as part of this process:

- Supportive and constructive feedback
- Clear details of inappropriate behaviour
- Suggestions regarding what and how to improve; and an agreed period of time to demonstrate improvement after each stage (unless their behaviour warrants immediate discharge as described below)

A volunteer placement may be ended without warning if Crisis believes that there is sufficient cause, i.e. where behaviour is too inappropriate or harmful. Examples of this include:

- A breach of confidentiality
- Acts that bring Crisis into disrepute
- Acts that contravene Crisis Health & Safety policy
- Any verbal or physical act that contravenes Crisis Equal Opportunities policy
- Physical and/ or verbal use of members of staff, other volunteers, members and visitors
- If any alcohol/ drugs are consumed at any time within Crisis buildings

## **9.0 Leaving Procedure**

### **9.1 Notifying your supervisor**

Crisis accepts that volunteers will leave the organisation at some point for various reasons. In all occasions volunteers should make their supervisors aware of their plan to leave. This is so Crisis has enough time to hold an exit interview and where possible enough time to recruit a new volunteer. The exit interview will include the following questions:

### **9.2 Exit Interview**

All volunteers who leave their voluntary role at Crisis have an exit interview with their supervisor, preferably on the last volunteering day. The purpose of this interview is for the supervisor to learn how the volunteering experience has been for the volunteer, in order that we can make any changes in the way we involve volunteers in the future. Our aim is that the interview is a positive experience and will 'round off' the volunteering placement for the volunteer.

In cases where a one to one interview is not feasible an e-mail questionnaire will be provided.

### **9.3 References**

Crisis will provide references for all volunteers who have given a minimum of three months continuous voluntary service. For Crisis Open Christmas and other one off events we are able to provide on request a generic letter explaining when and where you volunteered for Crisis.

## **10. Volunteer Policy Monitoring**

To ensure that this document is reflective of the current volunteering program, Crisis will continually monitor and update as necessary on an annual basis.