

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Aims and Principle

L.I.F.E. is a voluntary organisation, and as such volunteers form the platform from which all work is delivered. It is essential to the continual expansion, growth and development of L.I.F.E. that new and familiar volunteers maintain involvement with the organisation and its work. Volunteers contribute to the organisation by helping the organisation achieve its main aim of decreasing suffering and increasing well-being through social, educational, therapeutic, and medical interventions. Volunteers are therefore incredibly valuable, and are supported in their work through mentoring and support.

The organisation aims to act as the eyes, ears, and voice for children and adults currently living in precarious and uncertain circumstances. We strive to promote understanding and well-being, reaching all parts of the community of volunteers as well as the people we aim to support. The organisation supports rigorous research, education and professional training; promoting the highest standards of effective, efficient and ethical practice of its volunteers. We aspire to be forward thinking and socially responsible, ensuring that decision-makers are briefed on all relevant aspects of emergent issues. Our organisation is fortunate enough to attract volunteers of the highest calibre, which enables us to develop potential and strive for equality and diversity at all levels.

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is undertaken without financial gain. Being a volunteer with our organisation is fun, interesting and productive.

The Volunteer Policy

This policy aims to make a positive impact upon the working relations between the organisation and our partners, and our volunteers. We believe that volunteers play an essential role in providing care services through our programme, increasing our international profile, and fundraising for projects to benefit people in need. We aim to ensure that all volunteers are valued for their contribution and attempt to provide the necessary support and training.

The following principles govern volunteers within our organisation:

- Choice: volunteering must be a choice made freely by each individual;

L.I.F.E. VOLUNTEER POLICIES 2009

- Diversity: volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, sexuality, faith etc.;
- Volunteers should be recruited to enhance a service, not to replace paid staff;
- The importance of clear task descriptions for volunteers;
- The development of opportunities for volunteers to develop their skills;
- The provision of policies which govern volunteers including equal opportunities, abusive behaviour, complaints and grievance policies.

Statement of Interest

- Clear information about the organisation and the work of the organisation through voluntary aid is available at all times through the CAST and L.I.F.E. websites.
- The role of volunteers within the organisation takes five different forms.
 1. L.I.F.E. Directors: These volunteers manage the conduct of the organisation, volunteers, and partners of the organisation. They are responsible for the finance of the organisation, maintaining the safety and integrity of the organisation, and developing the organisation. It is the responsibility of the L.I.F.E. Directors to manage the projects L.I.F.E. undertakes, and support the Task Groups to ensure the welfare of the beneficiaries of the projects and the other volunteers.
 2. Task Groups: The role of the Task Groups is to support the L.I.F.E. Directors and supervise the majority of CAST volunteers operating for L.I.F.E. The Task Groups are collectively responsible for the welfare of the majority of volunteers who work on our overseas projects and fundraise for the organisation and our partners. The Task Groups liaise with the partners of the organisation in order to maintain the quality of designated projects, the welfare of the volunteers, and to ensure our projects benefit the identified beneficiaries. The Task Groups is answerable to the International Volunteer Manager and L.I.F.E. Directors.
 3. Team Leaders: Team Leaders are volunteers who have demonstrated exceptional commitment and skills which benefit the volunteers who work on designated projects. Team Leaders are directly responsible for the volunteers who accompany them on trips to designated projects. Team Leaders liaise between Project Managers and Project Co-ordinators before, during and after they lead a team on a project. They are the main contact person for their team members. Team Leaders

L.I.F.E. VOLUNTEER POLICIES 2009

are generally answerable to the International Volunteer Manager, although in some cases they will be required to liaise with the L.I.F.E. Directors.

4. Specialist Volunteers: Specialists from many fields volunteer with the organisation and provide support through training, experience and skills of value to projects, raising awareness, and fundraising. They are supported in their work by the L.I.F.E. Directors, Project Coordinators and often work alongside all volunteers.
 5. Volunteers: Volunteers of 16 years and over can work abroad on our projects and expect support from the Task Groups and Team Leader(s). Volunteers are expected to act responsibly at all time whilst working with the organisation, make themselves aware of the information available to them, and fundraise for the projects. Volunteers can expect good quality training, support, and information about their work in advance of the work commencing. Volunteers are answerable to the Task Groups and their Team Leader(s). Volunteers should make themselves aware of the Health and Safety Policy and relevant risk assessment(s) in order to prepare for their trip. Volunteers should be mindful of their personal health and safety based on the information they have access to and their individual needs. L.I.F.E. and partners go to all reasonable lengths to ensure volunteer's safety, but volunteers should be aware that different countries vary in health and safety standards. We do not have direct control over some of the places we work in, and as such first aid supplies may not always be available.
- There are no paid staff within CAST, and as such all volunteers should support each other.
 - L.I.F.E. views all volunteering opportunities as rewarding experiences, and encourages all volunteers to make the most of their time working on projects.
 - There are support systems in places for all volunteers, and volunteers should seek the relevant guidance if they are experiencing concerns.
 - It is expected that individual volunteers will carry out all reasonable tasks assigned to them to the best of their ability, and to generally promote our interests and to abide by the terms and conditions set out in this policy and agreement.
 - We are committed to the rights of the people we work with. In view of this, we reserve the right to refuse voluntary help and to terminate or vary a placement at any time without prior notice.

Recruitment and Selection

As L.I.F.E. works with vulnerable groups of people, we implement a formal selection process. Volunteer posts are advertised through the website, presentations, agencies, volunteer recruitment websites, schools, universities, and professional bodies. Anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to volunteer with our organisation through the website www.cast-uk.com. Posts are advertised all year round.

Once an application form has been received by post/email to L.I.F.E., an interview is arranged. Interviews may not be necessary for returning volunteers who have volunteered with us before. Two written references are required with every new application. A recommendation is required from a Team Leader/ Task Group Member for a returning volunteer to return. The role of the Equal Opportunities Policy is to encourage diversity within the volunteer network.

Equal Opportunities Summary: We work with a diverse client group and recognise that by encouraging diversity in our volunteers we are in a better position to meet their needs. All our volunteer policies are based on the principles of fairness and equality. Decisions on the selection of volunteers are based solely on ability and character, with each person being judged fairly against the criteria for the particular role.

The experience, qualities, skills and needs of volunteers are taken into account when deciding if they are suitable for a placement, and if so what that placement should be. There is no guarantee that a volunteer will be found an immediate placement as we believe that the placement should be mutually beneficial for the volunteer, L.I.F.E. and Partners, and the project beneficiaries.

Any volunteering shall be of a fixed term and shall terminate at the expiry of the period unless expressly renewed in writing by the volunteer by completing a returning volunteer form from the CAST website. Any placement may however be terminated any time without notice if the Team Leader(s), Project Co-ordinator, or Project Manager(s) deems this to be in the best interest of the volunteers, L.I.F.E. and Partners, and the project beneficiaries. Such termination need not involve any fault, shortcoming or wrongdoing attributable

to the volunteer and reasons for termination will be given. If this situation arises, all efforts will be made to find volunteers an alternative placement on an existing L.I.F.E. project.

Security and Screening

- All volunteers must be interviewed by two members of L.I.F.E.
- All volunteers who do not currently possess an enhanced CRB disclosure completed within the last 24 months by an independent body will require a CRB check. CRB checks are conducted by Attend for L.I.F.E. volunteers at a reduced rate.
- Individuals who have committed crimes against others are unlikely to be accepted on to a programme which gives them direct access to vulnerable people. However, in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy we will examine each case on an individual basis.
- Due to the vulnerable groups of people we support, no exceptions can be made for overseas applicants unless there are special circumstances. Special circumstances must be approved by the International Volunteer Manager and a L.I.F.E. Director.
- CRB checks may not be necessary for UK fundraisers.
- CRB checks are sought following acceptance onto the programme, before work commences. Final acceptance onto the programme is dependent upon the full disclosure of an offence and further discussion by the applicant, or a CRB check.
- Information on disclosures can be discussed between a volunteer and Project Co-ordinator. The information disclosed would only be discussed further with relevant managerial personnel.
- Volunteers should make themselves aware of the Disciplinary Policy and Code of Conduct, and conduct themselves accordingly. If a volunteer breaks the rules described, that volunteer could be expelled from the trip and forfeit any right to a refund as L.I.F.E. and partners can not cover the costs of rogue volunteers.
- The Task Groups have a confidentiality agreement to ensure the safety of volunteer information, and the welfare of volunteers.

Training and Support

We want to provide the best service we can to the beneficiaries of our projects, so we have a strong commitment to providing a high level of support and training for our volunteers. We believe it is very much a two-way relationship, i.e. volunteers should make the most of opportunities presented to them, and in return the organisation will provide support, help and training needed to carry out effective volunteer work.

- The organisation provides comprehensive information about the work volunteers can undertake with us which can be obtained through the CAST website, project specific induction packs, annual induction event, or by contacting the Project Co-ordinators. It is the responsibility of the individual volunteer to read and understand this information, or to contact their Project Co-ordinator or Team Leader should they not understand.
- The organisation arranges an annual Induction Day each May at the University of Manchester. Further training is also made available, and the organisation endeavours to provide six months notice whenever possible. It is the responsibility of each individual volunteer to make themselves aware of these sessions and attend.

Expenses

Due to the nature of the organisation, no volunteer expenses can be covered. There may however be special circumstances where flights or an element of other expense such as accommodation can be covered in return for exceptional volunteer work.

Support and Supervision

- The main points of contact for general enquiries of volunteers should be their Project Co-ordinator or Team Leader(s). If the volunteer is experiencing severe concerns, (s)he should contact the International Volunteer Manager or L.I.F.E. Directors in writing.
- The L.I.F.E. Directors are responsible for the support of the Task Groups and Specialist Volunteers. The International Volunteer Manager is responsible for the welfare of the Task Group members. The Task Groups are collectively responsible for supporting the volunteers. Volunteers should make themselves aware of their relevant contact person, and support each other when possible.

L.I.F.E. VOLUNTEER POLICIES 2009

- There will be at least one Team Leader on every trip to support and govern volunteers, and liaise between the volunteers and Project Managers.

Health and Safety of Volunteers

L.I.F.E. takes safety very seriously; the safety of the vulnerable people we support, the safety of staff, and of course the safety of volunteers.

- Risk assessments are conducted on all our projects before volunteers visit them. These assessments are available to volunteers upon request.
- Most projects also have a local Volunteer Coordinator present at all times and a buddy system with local volunteers to help L.I.F.E. volunteers get around and translate for them. Team Leaders and more experienced volunteers are also on hand to help and support volunteers.
- We provide a comprehensive induction session and core training in order to prepare volunteers for their work. Project Co-ordinators are also available before and after a volunteer's trip as an added source of help and support.
- We include a detailed application form and face-to-face interview as part of the application process in order to know more about volunteers before they travel to projects. This also gives volunteers a chance to speak with us and ask any questions they may have.
- We also have a number of core policies and a code of conduct which we expect volunteers and staff to abide by.

L.I.F.E. VOLUNTEER POLICIES 2009

We have an enhanced duty of care to the people we work with. We are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure safety and well-being. During volunteer tasks, volunteers are likely to have substantial access to children and vulnerable people. We need to ensure that these people, as well as all members of the volunteer team, are safe. We may therefore conduct CRB checks if an applicant does not currently hold a valid CRB check, or if there are other mitigating circumstances.

We are dedicated to an Equal Opportunities Policy and will treat each case individually.

We also need to be mindful of the children's safety with regards to photos and media attention. We have safety measures in place which you will be informed of when you are accepted onto a programme. The only people able to give you authorisation to use photos of children, adults, or staff in state care/employment are the local authorities. You can contact them through us.

Projects may also require volunteers to wear identity badges so the authorities are able to identify you as from a charity or NGO. If you have any questions please contact us at enquiries@cast-uk.com

- All volunteers will fly together on the designated flights provided in their acceptance letter by their Project Co-ordinator in order to ensure all volunteers arrive at their destination together. There may be exceptional circumstances where this isn't possible, but alternative arrangements must only be approved by the International Volunteer Manager and a Director of L.I.F.E.
- L.I.F.E. is a fully approved and supported member of Attend. Attend is the UK's leading membership-based organisation supporting volunteering in health and social care. Attend support us through providing advice, advocacy, insurance, CRB provisions, and in many other ways.

For further information please refer to the Health and Safety policy.

Confidentiality

Volunteers should respect each other's privacy at all times, and not disclose personal information learnt in confidence unless they are concerned the individual may harm themselves or others. In this case, the appropriate Team Leader or Project Co-ordinator should be alerted immediately and sensitively.

Details disclosed in confidence on the application form, through the interview process, or following discussions will only be passed to the relevant managerial personnel if deemed necessary. Volunteers will be notified before any further discussions are held.

Insurance

L.I.F.E. has appropriate insurance through Attend to cover volunteers in the L.I.F.E. office and general UK support. Volunteers should be made aware that although L.I.F.E. and our partners have liability insurance, volunteers must ensure they are in possession of suitable travel insurance which will cover them during their placement.

Resolving Problems

- Minor concerns of volunteers should be voiced to their Team Leader or appropriate Project Co-ordinator.
- Serious concerns or grievances should be submitted in writing to the L.I.F.E. Directors and/or the International Volunteer Manager.
- The appropriate person shall then contact the volunteer in order to try to resolve the problem.
- Accident and complaint forms are available through the CAST website.

Policy Review

Policies are reviewed annually or sooner if specific problems arise.