

## Volunteer Policy

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All volunteers offering their services to Nova will have their offers dealt with promptly and be given a warm welcome, which reflects the value we give to volunteers. It is recognised that volunteers play a very important role, and their efforts contribute highly to the overall success of Nova.

The involvement of volunteers within the organisation will be encouraged and supported whenever possible.

### About Nova

#### What we are

Nova New Opportunities is a registered charitable organisation situated in North Kensington. Operating within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for 40 years, the charity has evolved into a reputable provider of adult education, family support, and employment assistance.

#### What we do

Our diverse services encompass:

- basic skills and ESOL classes
- wellbeing activities
- information and guidance
- volunteering
- social events
- family support programs

Focusing on delivering high-quality services, we are equally committed to being approachable, welcoming, and non-judgmental to each individual who walks through our doors. Our unique approach, characterised by a person-centred and holistic ethos with interconnected services, sets us apart in the area. Our organisation garners overwhelmingly positive feedback from beneficiaries who predominantly discover our services through word-of-mouth referrals.

Nova has and continues to be greatly supported by volunteers. Our volunteers assist us in many aspects of our work. Volunteers are an important and valued part of Nova.

Nova does not use volunteers to replace paid staff; the work of volunteers will be that of a supportive, complementary nature alongside paid staff.

We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and feel a full part of our team.

## Recruitment

Nova advertises for volunteers in the following ways:

- Word of mouth in the community
- Through Nova's services
- Nova website and social media
- Charity Jobs website
- RBKC Volunteer Centre

Volunteers attend an informal interview where a skill and interest match is completed. We normally ask for at least 2 references (we can help you identify your referees).

New volunteers can begin a trial placement at Nova whilst waiting for referee forms to be returned.

Volunteers may be required to have a standard or enhanced Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) Check. If you do not already have a DBS, Nova will arrange for the check to be done for you. You will not be asked to pay for this. The Nova Safeguarding Leads will be happy to explain our policy.

## Induction/Support/Training

Volunteers start at Nova with an Induction and signing of Volunteer Agreements including details of your volunteer role/responsibilities (the agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment).

Nova will assign all volunteers a line manager to ensure regular support throughout a volunteers stay with us.

Training will be given to all volunteers where necessary, and this will be reviewed and updated regularly.

## Expenses

As a charity it's important that we're sensible with every pound that we spend. We want all volunteers to claim expenses, but they do have to be reasonable. This is why there are maximum limits for expenses. We encourage anyone claiming expenses to try and find the most cost-effective method possible, without putting their safety or wellbeing at risk. We can only pay back money you spend as part of your volunteering role.

We cover travel, food and drink, and, where needed, other (see below) costs for volunteers. However, people should not be excluded from volunteering and if volunteers need to go above these limits or claim for expenses that do not fall into these categories, they should talk to their line manager at Nova. Information on refunding any costs of volunteering is outlined below.

We will pay for any travel costs to and from where people are volunteering or if they need to travel as part of their role. Where possible we ask volunteers to book as early as they can and to choose the best value option. This includes choosing public transport over car if it's cheaper. Journeys made using Oyster cards and similar prepaid travel cards can be claimed by showing us suitable receipts, for example a print of your Oyster TFL account. Note: We're not able to pay top up charges for any travel cards. We will repay travel by public transport or car up to £10. If volunteers need to take a taxi, they should get permission in writing in advance. When volunteers drive to and from, or as part of, their volunteer role we will repay the cost of petrol at 50p per mile. Please include the postcodes for the start and end of each car journey. If a volunteer is travelling a long distance, for example to attend a national event, then their volunteering contact for the event or project will inform them of the cost limit well in advance of the event.

If people are volunteering over a mealtime, and where a meal is not provided, we will pay back the cost of a meal. Lunch can be up to £7. An evening meal can be up to £15 if volunteering past 7pm in the evening. Reasonable costs of soft and hot drinks will be paid back as part of the above limits. If volunteering for a full day or longer no more than £15 can be claimed in a 24-hour period. We do not repay the cost of alcohol. While we have set limits for the amount to be claimed for food, we want to make sure we support volunteers to have a healthy balanced diet and that special dietary requirements are met. Volunteers with any concerns should talk to their line manager at Nova.

Where it's agreed that a volunteer needs to use a personal mobile phone or landline as part of their role, we will cover the costs. We will do this when the minutes or data allowance of a volunteer's phone or internet contract are exceeded as a result of their volunteering. Calls must be itemised on a bill in order to be claimed.

We ask that volunteers agree any other costs in writing with their Nova line manager before purchasing items like stationery. When a volunteer role requires a specific piece of equipment, we will look to buy these in bulk, and give these to volunteers.

We can pay expenses by bank transfer (BACS), which is our preferred method, or in cash. Expenses should be claimed within one month of the activity. This helps us to plan and keep track of funds.

Volunteers are required to keep receipts as proof of any expenditure. Expenses must be agreed with the line manager before any costs are incurred. Volunteers must complete and sign a volunteer expense claim form for any expenses the form can be electronically signed and submitted to the line manager via email. Original receipts must be attached to the form for it to be approved. The expense claim will be checked and signed off by the relevant person at Nova before being submitted for payment. Payment by bank transfer (BACS) will be paid within 10 working days of a

correctly filled expenses claim form being given to the line manager. In most cases they will be paid sooner. Payment in cash will be issued in person at our 2 Thorpe Close W10 5XL office within 10 working days of the correctly filled expenses form being received. It is down to a volunteer's line manager to check that the claimed and approved money is received by the volunteer.

### **Insurance**

Nova's public and employer's liability insurance policies cover the activities of volunteers whilst engaged in work for Nova.

Insurers will not cover the personal belongings of volunteers against loss or theft. It is the responsibility of each volunteer to look after their own personal belongings.

### **Equal Opportunities**

Nova has a commitment to Equal Opportunities and Diversity. Nova will not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, being a traveller or gypsy, age, religion, gender or transgender identity, sexual orientation, marital and civil partnership status, family circumstances or caring responsibilities, pregnancy and maternity or disability.

A copy of our Equal Opportunities Policy is in the Policies and Procedures File and volunteers are expected to have an understanding of and commitment to this policy.

### **Health and Safety**

Nova has a duty of care to avoid exposing volunteers, staff, clients, and members of the public who use Nova's premises to risks to their health and safety.

All staff, volunteers and users of Nova's premises are bound by the Health and Safety Regulations. A copy of the Policy is in the Policies and Procedures File in the office; we ask that all volunteers familiarize themselves with this policy.

During the Induction process, volunteers will be alerted to Health and Safety risks and procedures.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as staff, which is that they must ensure that information about people who register as volunteers or clients are accessible only to staff and those volunteers who are required to need the information for their work.

Volunteers will not disclose to anyone, other than their supervisor, any information considered sensitive, personal, financial, or private without the knowledge or consent of the individual, or a staff member at Nova.

### **Gifts**

The acceptance of gifts from our service users is not encouraged. Where refusal might cause offence, it is important that a gift is accepted by volunteers as representatives of Nova and not as individuals and they are not placing Nova or the volunteer under any obligation. Volunteers should inform their supervisor if a gift is offered and accepted.

### **Problem Solving**

Nova always aims to provide services in an accessible and professional manner.

We do recognise that there might be times when volunteers feel less than satisfied with our performance or may have a complaint about a colleague.

In the first instance, we recommend the volunteer expresses their concerns to their supervisor with the aim of resolving the problem informally. We welcome feedback to improve our services.

If this does not resolve the issue or if the problem is with your supervisor, we recommend the volunteer arranges to speak to the CEO of Nova. Complaints should ideally be made while you are volunteering at with us so we can resolve the issue. The time limit for complaints to be considered is three months after you have ceased volunteering at Nova.

### **Disciplinary Procedure**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of Nova or who fail to perform their voluntary work satisfactorily are subject to disciplinary procedures. Whenever possible this includes a series of verbal and written warnings.

Volunteers may be discharged without warning if we believe that there is sufficient cause i.e. where behaviour is too inappropriate, harmful or dangerous for the volunteer to continue to work with us. In such cases we reserve the right to request a volunteer leave immediately.

Examples of this include:

- A breach of confidentiality
- Acts that bring Nova into disrepute
- Acts that contravene Nova's Health and Safety policy
- Any verbal or physical act that contravenes Nova's Equal Opportunities policy

- False declarations of any kind made in relation to securing your placement here
- Physical and/or verbal abuse of services users or co-workers

This is not an exhaustive list but it gives an idea of the kinds of behaviour that we would find unacceptable. Any volunteer who has been dismissed and who feels that he/she has been treated unfairly has a time-limited right to appeal to the Board of Trustees.

**Updated: February 2024**

**Next review date: February 2025**