**2.3 Volunteer Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and volunteers regarding Barnet Children Centres volunteering activities and establish a framework for good practice.

**What is volunteering?**

*“Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain”* ***Home Office Volunteering Unit.***

Barnet’s Children Centres recognises the valuable contribution made by volunteers to the local area and the vast array of skills, experience and enthusiasm that exist within the community. We believe in involving volunteers in our activities because they reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community and society we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective to all our work.

Barnet Children Centres defines volunteers and volunteering under the following categories:

* **individual volunteers:**

- short term (ad hoc and less than 5 working days) over a 12 month period

- medium term (up to 4 weeks)

- long term (4 weeks and longer)

* **volunteer interns:** graduates, tertiary students and individuals who volunteer to gain further experience towards their education and training. Individuals seeking to retrain or realign their skills and experience may seek to volunteer with the organisation over a specific period of time in order to gain experience in their newly chosen field
* **work placement volunteers**: students who wish to gain experience in the workplace in support of an academic requirement ( Appendix XXX)

Barnet Children Centres does not want to discourage members of the community from becoming involved in our work, and seeks to lessen as much as possible the administration burdens of recording and tracking the participation and presence of volunteers. However, where a member of the public makes a commitment to contribute their time and skills on a regular basis the principles, processes and forms inherent to this policy must apply.

**Volunteering Principles**

This policy is underpinned by the following principles. Barnet Children Centres:

* ensures that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place to support them in contributing to Barnet Children Centres’s work
* recognises volunteers as a core part of our team, with a distinctive and complementary role alongside paid staff
* ensures that the concerns of volunteers are listened to and given due consideration
* explains and accepts its responsibility for its volunteers and their wellbeing and respects their wish to always have a fair hearing if a conflict arises
* ensures that volunteers enhance its services by providing support to persons undertaking existing roles, and that they do not carry out work or become responsible for delivering outcomes that are normally the responsibility of paid staff
* expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and will actively seek to involve them in their work
* recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development, and will seek to assist volunteers to meet these needs where it is appropriate, and to support them in achieving their role performance
* recognises that volunteers are a valuable and integral part of society who deserve appropriate support and recognition.

**Responsibilities**

**Recruitment of Volunteers:**

Barnet Children Centres is committed to ensuring all sections of the community are represented among our volunteers.

In recruiting volunteers Barnet Children Centres will:

* wherever possible advertise volunteering opportunities widely within the community and on social media and internet sites
* adopt standard procedures in the recruitment and selection of volunteers
* where appropriate provide written role descriptions which outline the skills and duties required
* treat information collected in relation to the volunteer in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998
* establish and maintain clear vetting procedures for those who will work within regulated activities
* ensure volunteers comply with our corporate policies and procedures
* reserve the right to refuse volunteers. If individuals are unsuccessful in applying to take part volunteering with Barnet Children Centres, they will be offered an opportunity to discuss the outcome and receive feedback.

**Volunteer Induction**

All volunteers are provided with a written letter of welcome **(Appendix XXX)**, which outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both the volunteer and Barnet Children Centres. This agreement may be reviewed at any time with the consent of the volunteer and their supervisor.

Short-term volunteers will not be provided with a full induction but will receive basic health and safety training, and will be required to provide emergency contact information and any relevant personal health details.

Medium and long-term volunteers will receive an Induction Checklist (appendix XXX) and attend a formal induction into Barnet Children Centres.

Volunteers are given a copy of the Volunteer policy and the Disciplinary and Grievance policies. Volunteers are expected to operate within the framework of the policies. In addition, they should be aware of the Equal Opportunity and Diversity policies and as Barnet Children Centres volunteers their right to equitable treatment and respect within the workplace (ref 6 below).

All volunteer placements are subject to a trial period the length of which will depend on the nature and hours of their volunteering. During this period volunteers are given additional supervisory support and will attend a review meeting with their supervisor at the end of the trial period to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the volunteering arrangement.

**Support and Training**

Barnet Children Centres is committed to providing skills development to its volunteers to enhance their competencies. The volunteer’s supervisor will provide them with regular one to one meetings and feedback on their progress, and will be available to discuss their future development and any problems that may arise. The supervisor will also deal with any complaint or grievance relating to the volunteer.

Volunteers are entitled to receive training to enhance competencies and skills in line with the performance requirements of their role. Wherever possible, training should be delivered via coaching or as on the job in-house learning opportunities.

Volunteers will be provided with the following mandatory training:

* **short term:** project and/or office Induction by the Line Manger, project health and safety awareness and a team briefing
* **medium and long term volunteers, volunteer-interns and work placement**

**volunteers:** Barnet children centres induction, office induction, team induction, equality and diversity training, health and safety, and where appropriate, NSPCC child protection awareness.

Upon the recommendation of the line manager volunteers may attend in-house training which is relevant to their volunteering role. This is subject to the availability of places. Volunteers attending approved training may do so within their normal hours of volunteering and claim out of pocket expenses.

All individual volunteers, volunteer–interns and work placement volunteers will have a personal development plan (PDP) which records training and development undertaken during their time with Barnet children centres. A copy will be provided on request and at the commencement of each Barnet children centres performance year.

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning Barnet children centres and its work. The format and regularity of support and supervision will depend on the type of volunteering undertaken, and will be agreed between the volunteer and their supervisor at the commencement of their time with Barnet children centres. A Volunteer and Line Manager 1:1 meeting form is available and should be used to ensure performance needs are properly discussed and evidenced, and that the individual receives appropriate and effective line management support.

The relevant manager is responsible for the overall management of volunteer involvement, including overseeing the implementation of this policy.

Barnet children centres will endeavor to communicate with volunteers in appropriate ways.

**Volunteer’s Rights and Responsibilities**

***Volunteer’s Rights***

Volunteers have the right to:

* know what is expected of them
* know their rights and responsibilities
* support and supervision
* appreciation for their efforts
* safe working conditions
* workplace insurance cover in accordance with their statutory rights
* out of pocket expenses in line with their volunteer responsibilities
* training or coaching relevant to their volunteering responsibilities
* access to personal development activities
* adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfill their roles.

***Volunteer’s Responsibilities***

Barnet Children Centres expects volunteers to:

* volunteer within Barnet children centres’ culture of promoting equal opportunity and diversity, where any discriminatory behaviour by employees, volunteers, trustees and other stakeholders is always challenged in a polite and constructive manner so the person making them has a chance to correct their behavior
* be reliable and punctual
* maintain the confidentiality of privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering, whether this information involves partners, a member of staff, volunteers, other persons or the overall business of the organization
* attend induction, training and support sessions
* carry out their tasks in line with Barnet children centres’ aims and values
* volunteer within agreed guidelines including observance of Barnet children centres’ policies on diversity and equality, health and safety, grievance, confidentiality. Breaches these policies could result in disciplinary procedures
* as representatives of the organisation, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a professional image to our partners and to the community

**Expenses**

Barnet Children Centres offer volunteers full reimbursement of out of pocket expenses that are incurred on behalf of Barnet Children Centres, providing that the nature of these expenses has been agreed in advance.

Barnet Children Centres will only reimburse volunteers for agreed expenses and expenditure, supported by a receipt in accordance with Barnet Children Centres financial procedures

Barnet Children Centres will pay the following out of pocket expenses on production receipts and a completed petty cash claims form:

* reimbursement of bus/train fares as agreed beforehand with their line manager
* travel from home to and from the place of volunteering and any additional travel necessary in the course of volunteering subject to prior approval from their line manager
* meal expenses, subject to a maximum limit of £4 where the volunteering has exceeded 5 hours in a day, or where the volunteer has been required to work through a meal break
* other expenditure incurred through volunteering which has been authorised in advance by the line manager.

Journeys must be made in the cheapest practicable way and Barnet Children Centres requires volunteers to utilise public transport whenever and wherever available.

The line manager must approve any additional expenses, such as materials, protective clothing etc., before a volunteer incurs these costs. Expenses may be claimed from the Locality Business and Resource Manager on production of a claim form and receipts, and will be paid weekly.

**Insurance**

Volunteers are fully covered by Barnet Children Centres insurance whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any activities on behalf of Barnet Children Centres.

Volunteers who choose to use their personal vehicle in connection with their volunteering must contact their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover is in place.

Barnet Children Centres public liability and personal accident insurance does not cover personal possessions and volunteers are advised to make their own arrangements and to take normal precautions with their own belongings.

**Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

The Equal Opportunities and Equality & Diversity policies are available in the Policies and Procedures section of the S: Drive (see below). Volunteers have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with the policies and comply with them at all times. Where the volunteer does not have access to these policies in digital format, hard copies must be made available to them.

Barnet Children Centres welcomes the diversity of tradition, culture and belief within the communities we serve. We aim to provide appropriate and responsive services in support of our organisational purpose to all parts of those communities, especially those experiencing poverty or other forms of exclusion. We will therefore seek to ensure that we reflect our support for diversity through our programmes, practices, governance, staffing and operations. We will not accept discrimination within Barnet Children Centres on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability or age.

The promotion of diversity and genuine equality of opportunity for all are central to ensuring a fair and just society. Barnet Children Centres is committed to ensuring all of our employees, volunteers, trustees and stakeholders are given equal opportunity to achieve their potential and are valued for the contribution they can make.

Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to Barnet Children Centres volunteer opportunities, and equality of treatment for our volunteers under all our policies and within our organisational and operational practices.

**Copies of the following policies may be found on the shared drive:**

*S:\Early\_Years-15\Archive\EYSupport&Services\Children'sCentres\SouthLocality\PoliciesandProcedures*

**Health and Safety in the workplace**

Barnet Children Centres provides safe and healthy conditions, equipment and systems of work for all employees and volunteers, and provides information, training and supervision necessary to achieve this.

Volunteers must follow and adhere to Barnet Children Centres’s Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which will be made available to all volunteers. Additional information regarding the use of tools on site and risk assessments will also be provided where it is appropriate to the nature of the role the volunteer may undertake.

It is the manager’s responsibility to ensure that the volunteer is suitably trained or qualified to carry out any tasks that they are asked to perform. Managers should ensure that all tasks are risk assessed, and that adequate controls and safety measures are in place.

**A copy of this policy may be found on the shared drive:**

*S:\Early\_Years-015\Archive\EYSupport&Services\Children'sCentres\SouthLocality\Health&Safety*

**Scope**

This policy applies to all Barnet Children Centres employees, partners and other stakeholders. This policy is subject to the provisions outlined in our Equal Opportunities policy, and in particular the Equality Act 2010.

**Recruitment & Management Procedures – see workflow diagrams below**

* Barnet Children Centres will not recruit volunteers to displace any paid employee. Volunteers may be recruited to undertake specific tasks delegated by line managers and team leaders, which would increase the capacity of Barnet Children Centres to deliver its work
* Barnet Children Centres recognises that volunteering opportunities and the availability of people to undertake them is variable and often for significantly differing time periods; long and short term and often tied to a specific project deliverable. Barnet Children Centres does not want to discourage involvement by creating barriers to volunteering, for example by requiring an excessive level of form filling. The following recruitment requirements reflect the differences in recruitment and administration of volunteers and volunteering within Barnet Children Centres.

**The Volunteer Recruitment process:**

* all potential volunteers will be interviewed by the relevant manager, and if appropriate, by a senior member manager. The interview should be a two way informal process used to assess their suitability to volunteer with Barnet Children Centres, and to establish if Barnet Children Centres is the right organisation for the potential volunteer
* prospective volunteers will be asked to provide information regarding what they would like to do for Barnet Children Centres; their availability, the location at which they would like to volunteer, their competencies and personal or professional suitability, and how best their potential might be realised through Barnet Children Centres. This is also an opportunity for the volunteer to ask any questions about Barnet Children Centres and its work
* Where required, volunteers must provide two references upon application; these could be a friend of the family, work colleague, teacher at college, etc. but must not be a family member or relative. (Appendix XXX)
* Upon commencing with Barnet Children Centres every new volunteer is required to attend an Induction, which may be carried out on either a one to one basis or in small groups. During the induction the volunteer/s will receive a briefing of the background, nature and purpose of the organisation, and receive training in mandatory requirements such as Diversity and Equality, Health and Safety and any training necessary for working with children or vulnerable people.

**Induction Checklist**

* an overview of the work of Barnet Children Centres
* the identification of their primary supervisor
* a briefing on the volunteer’s role and how they will be supported by the organisation
* relevant health and safety training including how to access the health and safety policy
* access to the Equality and Diversity policy
* a familiarisation tour of the office and the opportunity to meet staff and other volunteers, where appropriate
* fire training and personal safety, where appropriate
* their volunteering responsibilities
* Barnet Children Centres facilities and working conditions
* a copy of the Volunteer policy
* how to claim out of pocket expenses and record hours
* what to do if they are unable to attend
* any appropriate training to support their volunteer responsibilities or as part of their induction to Barnet Children Centres
* an opportunity for the volunteer to ask questions about Barnet Children Centres and to clarify their role
* completion of personal details form including emergency contact details and relevant health information (Appendix XXX).

**Policy Review**
This policy and procedure will be regularly reviewed, and in the first instance after 12 months, and thereafter at a timescale to be determined

Reviewed: Feb **2016**

