



The Gaia Network

VOLUNTEERING POLICY

September 2018

Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Principles	Page 2
Recruitment	Page 3
Trial Period	Page 3
Volunteer Role Descriptions and Handbook	Page 3
Induction and Training	Page 3
Support	Page 3
The Volunteer's Voice	Page 4
Records	Page 4
Confidentiality	Page 4
Expenses	Page 4
Insurance	Page 4
Health and Safety	Page 4
Equal Opportunities	Page 4
Problem Solving	Page 5
When a Volunteer Leaves	Page 5
Monitoring and Evaluation	Page 5

1. Introduction

The Gaia Network exists to involve more people more effectively in volunteering to help solve real problems and enrich communities.

It does this by:

- Working with volunteer involving organisations to improve the diversity and quality of volunteer placements.
- Providing potential volunteers with the means to access volunteering opportunities.
- Helping people who might otherwise have found themselves excluded to take part in their communities.

The Gaia Network is committed to involving volunteers directly within the organisation to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Form our board of management
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of our users
- Provide different skills and perspectives
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded.

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers. The volunteer handbook and volunteer managers' handbook gives further details about the support and procedures in place for volunteers.

2. Principles

The Gaia Network:

- Recognizes that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to paid staff.
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organizational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the organization's work.
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- Recognizes that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- Will endeavor to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers.
- Recognizes that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts.

- Will endeavor to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible.
- Will endeavor to set examples of good practice in volunteering to other organizations in **The Gaia Network**

Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the community, and will be in line with **The Gaia Network** Equal Opportunities Policy. Positive action in recruitment may be used where appropriate.

A potential volunteer will be asked to complete a registration form (help will be given if necessary). All potential volunteers will be invited for an informal talk with the appropriate contact person within ten working days. If the opportunity is suitable a trial period will be agreed with the volunteer. A clear role description outlining the tasks to be undertaken and skills required will be given to the potential volunteer.

Where applicants are not placed in the role applied for, they will be provided with verbal feedback (or written explanation if requested) and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles either within **The Gaia Network** or other volunteer involving organisations.

3. Trial Period

There will be a trial period of four weeks to give the organisation and the volunteer time to discover if they are suited to each other. Progress will be reviewed during the trial period and also at the end, when the volunteer will either be referred to **The Gaia Network** for support and guidance if they are not suited to the role, or formally accepted for volunteering by **The Gaia Network**.

4. Volunteer Role Descriptions and Handbook

Volunteers will receive a role description and handbook containing full information about the organisation and their chosen area of volunteering and a clear idea of their responsibilities and the organization's responsibilities to them.

5. Induction and Training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

6. Support

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person who will provide regular support. Support sessions will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed.

The **The Gaia Network** and/or Volunteering Development Officer will offer ongoing advice as required to all volunteers and staff who manage volunteers within **The Gaia Network**.

7. The Volunteer's Voice

Volunteers will be regularly kept up-to-date with activities in our organisation and will be consulted in decisions which affect them.

8. Records

Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the registration form, placement details, crisis contact, correspondence and any other relevant information in accordance with **The Gaia Network** Data Protection Policy.

9. Confidentiality

All volunteers are required to sign the **The Gaia Network** agreement.

10. Expenses

The Gaia Network will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses. **The Gaia Network** values its volunteers and is committed to ensuring there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All agreed out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed, including expenses for travel by the cheapest means of public transport, and reimbursement of meal costs, up to a maximum value, when volunteering over a meal period.

11. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by insurance while carrying out agreed duties.

12. Health and Safety

The Gaia Network will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare whilst volunteering in accordance with the organization's Health and Safety policy.

13. Equal Opportunities

Volunteers and staff will work in accordance with the centre's equal opportunities policy and will prevent discrimination on any grounds.

The Gaia Network is based in premises which are fully accessible to people with disabilities and within the limits of the annual **The Gaia Network** budget will provide additional support and equipment as necessary for volunteers with a disability.

14. Problem Solving

The relationship between **The Gaia Network** and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However **The Gaia Network** has a Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure to help deal with grievances that volunteers may have. In line with this procedure volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their named contact at any time.

If the contact person is unable to resolve the problem they will refer the matter to the **The Gaia Network** and ultimately the Chief Executive, with the permission of the volunteer.

The Gaia Network has a procedure on how it will deal with any disciplinary issue regarding a volunteer.

15. When a Volunteer Leaves

When volunteers move on from their role at **The Gaia Network** they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully with the **The Gaia Network** Manager.

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

16. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Gaia Network will systematically monitor and evaluate its use of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Approved by The Gaia Network Board:

Chairwoman - Ariane Eva Morin
Vice Chairwoman – Grace Mae Willis Hodgins
Committee Member – Rozana Alia Abdul Rahim
