

Volunteer Policy

Introduction

The Diocese of Bath & Wells recognises the immense benefits and contributions of volunteers to the support of the organisation and the mission of the church.

This document sets out the Bath & Wells Board of Finance's responsibilities and expectations in relation to its community of volunteers which include members of associated committees. It is expected that all volunteers and members will respect and uphold the vision, values and ethos of the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

Applicability

This policy applies to all volunteers, including members of associated committees of the DBF (hereafter referred to as the DBF).

Status of Volunteers

A volunteer is not an employee and therefore will not have a contract of employment with the DBF.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Volunteers are responsible for:
 - Following DBF policies and procedures
 - Acting appropriately as set out in their volunteer agreement, role description, terms of reference and this policy
 - Raising concerns with their supervisor/chair
- Supervisors/Chairs are responsible for:
 - Ensuring appropriate safer recruitment procedures are followed
 - Inducting and training volunteers appropriately as applies to their role
 - Resolving concerns with or about volunteers
- HR is responsible for providing guidance and advice in the implementation of this policy.

Values

The DBF aims to promote, facilitate and assist with the work and purposes of the Church of England for the advancement of the Christian faith in the Diocese of Bath & Wells. It is responsible for maintaining the sound financial structure needed to enable support of the clergy through stipend payments, managing parsonages and other ministerial housing; also by providing other facilities and resources in support of the mission and ministry of both clergy and lay people in parishes across the diocese.

Our diocesan vision is: in response to God's immense love for us, we seek to be God's people living and telling the story of Jesus.

The DBF benefits hugely from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of our volunteers. Together, with our different skills and ideas we can support those we seek to serve. We believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience too and are therefore committed to overseeing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met.

We strive to create a diverse and inclusive organisation and are committed to ensuring equality of access to volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment of volunteers in our policies and practices.

Recruitment

A person wishing to become a volunteer, including taking up a role on a committee will need to follow the DBF's safer recruitment procedure, as set out in the DBF's Recruitment & Selection Policy. This process may be varied in cases of elected roles. Volunteers will be asked to complete a short application form. Where the DBF is able to match the individual to a suitable role following an informal interview, references will be required and the completion of a confidential declaration form. Depending on the role a criminal records check with the Disclosure & Barring Service may be required. HR should be provided with a copy of these documents. All recruitment will be undertaken in line with the DBF's Equal Opportunities Policy.

A role description should be set out for all volunteer roles setting out the requirements of the role, the commitment involved and any skills and experience needed. The role description may be supplemented by a volunteer agreement which sets out mutual expectations. For members of committees the requirements of the role should be set out in the terms of reference for the committee.

Oversight

Volunteers will be provided with a named person/supervisor, normally an officer of the DBF, to turn to for support and guidance, identifying training requirements, countersigning expense claims, etc. In the case of members of committees they should raise concerns with the chair of the committee in the first instance with the Diocesan Secretary.

When a voluntary role commences the DBF will decide what training is required and if there is a need for an induction. This may vary by role. Some volunteer roles will be subject to an induction and 'settling in' period, the length of which depends on the nature and commitment of the voluntary work. During this period volunteers may be given additional support with review meetings held to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the arrangement. It is recommended that at least an annual review is undertaken with the volunteer and their named supervisor.

Training may include reviewing relevant DBF policies for example:

- Volunteer Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Fraud & Anti-corruption Policy

In order to effectively monitor the work that volunteers do and provide duty of care, a personal file may be maintained which may include details such as:

- contact details and other relevant personal information
- details of the application and selection process

- Agreements made
- Records of support and training undertaken
- Any complaints made or received

Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998, and volunteers are entitled to inspect all such information pertaining to their own involvement.

Confidentiality

Volunteers may become aware of confidential information about the DBF, its staff, visitors and partner organisations. Volunteers should not disclose such information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure where the law permits or requires disclosure. Media enquiries should always be directed to the Communications Team.

Expenses

The DBF endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles. Expenses can only be claimed where actual expenditure has been made. No payments such as honorarium or flat rates may be paid. An expenses form along with bank details should be completed and returned to the Finance Team for payment.

Where volunteers are claiming expenses for using their own car in the course of volunteering, including attending meetings, it is essential for them to let their insurance company know that they will be using their car in the course of volunteering. In general this should not involve an increase in premiums.

Dealing with problems

The volunteer's designated supervisor will be responsible for dealing with minor complaints or grievances about or by volunteers through the usual support and oversight process. We recognise our duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of all parties and therefore a formal process exists where issues cannot be resolved in this way, for further details please refer to appendix A. In the case of particularly serious offences this process may be bypassed and/or the subject of the complaint asked to stop volunteering. Where a criminal offence is suspected the matter will be handed to the police.

Expectations of Members of Committees

- Members will act within the DBF's governing document, the terms of reference set for the committee and DBF policy and procedures.
- Members accept that they have no legal right to act individually, except when the Board has given delegated authority to do so.
- Members will play an active role, making their skills, experience and knowledge available to the DBF.
- Members will develop and maintain a sound and up-to-date knowledge of the DBF and its environment.
- Members of committees are collectively responsible for ensuring that adequate and accurate records are kept of decisions made so that they can demonstrate that they have acted in accordance with governing documents and in the best interests of the organisation.

- From time to time, decisions will need to be taken with which other people disagree and which may be subject to close scrutiny. In these circumstances members should be able to demonstrate that they have acted honestly and reasonably in what they judged to be the best interests of the charity, taken appropriate professional or expert advice where appropriate, and based their decisions on directly relevant considerations.
- Members will act in the best interests of the DBF as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
- Members will participate in collective decision making, accepting a majority decision and will not act individually unless specifically authorised to do so.
- Members will not put themselves in a position where their personal interests conflict with their duty to act in the interest of the DBF. Where a conflict of interest arises, members should communicate this to the chair of the committee.
- Members should attend all appropriate meetings or give their apologies if they will be unavailable.
- Members should prepare fully for all meetings; this will include reading papers, querying anything not understood.
- Members will actively engage in discussions, debate and voting in meetings; contributing in a considered and constructive way, listening carefully and challenging sensitively.
- Members will endeavour to work considerately and respectfully with all those whom they come into contact, respecting the diversity, roles and boundaries of others.
- Members will not make public comments about the DBF unless authorised to do so.
- Members wishing to cease their commitment should inform the chair in advance in writing, stating their reasons for leaving.

Review

This policy is subject to regular review and will be updated as required.

Appendix A: Volunteers' Problem Solving Procedure

We believe that clear, open and fair procedures for solving problems are necessary both for the success of the DBF and for the fair treatment of all our volunteers. It is hoped that most issues and problems can be resolved swiftly and fairly informally. Should that not be possible the following procedures may be used to ensure that matters are dealt with fairly and transparently.

Where a volunteer wishes to make a complaint

Stage 1 - Verbal Complaint

If a volunteer has a complaint to make about a member of staff, the DBF or another volunteer they should do so at the earliest opportunity. The complaint should be made to the volunteer's supervisor unless the complaint is about that person, in which case the complaint should be made to the supervisor's line manager.

Stage 2 - Written Complaint

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage or the complaint is of a more serious nature, the volunteer should make a formal written complaint to the Diocesan Secretary. The Diocesan Secretary may nominate another member of staff not involved to investigate the complaint.

Stage 3 - Appeal

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of the written complaint they should contact the Chair of the Board of Finance or the Diocesan Bishop in writing within five working days of receiving the notification of the outcome. The appeal will be reviewed by the Chair (or a nominated deputy). The decision of the appeal will be communicated in writing and will be final.

Where there is a problem with or complaint about a volunteer

The DBF aims to support its volunteers so that they are able to enjoy their volunteering and meet the standards set by the DBF. It is hoped that if volunteers find they are struggling with their role, they will ask their designated supervisor or chair. If discussion has not managed to resolve a problem or if a complaint is made about a volunteer any of the following measures may be used depending on the severity of the problem. The DBF reserves the right to judge the severity of the problem.

Stage 1 - Discussion

A member of DBF staff will discuss the issue with the volunteer to try to identify its possible causes and try to find a way to resolve the situation. If necessary the DBF may be able to provide extra support or training or to review the role that the volunteer is fulfilling.

Stage 2 - Written Contact

If the issue has not been resolved through discussion, or if a serious problem has arisen, the volunteer will be contacted in writing outlining the problem and any action that might be taken to resolve it, with deadlines as appropriate. This may involve further meetings with the volunteer and other individuals in order to investigate a complaint. In some serious cases a volunteer may be required to cease volunteering immediately whilst the matter is explored. All complaints will be dealt with confidentially.

If at this stage the DBF does not believe that it will be possible to find a solution, this will be made clear. The decision of the Diocesan Secretary is final.

Stage 3 - Withdrawing from Volunteering

The DBF reserves the right to require the volunteer to cease volunteering, if necessary with immediate effect. In this case the volunteer will be made aware who they can contact if they have any issues with the DBF's decision.