



TAI CANOLBARTH CYMRU MID-WALES HOUSING

Yn barod **amdani** **Equal** to the challenge

Volunteer Policy

Strategic Aim:	To ensure the Association achieves excellence of staff resources, service provision to its customers and in reputation.
Reference No:	Volunteer Policy v1.11/3 April 2015
Date Of Issue:	19 th April 2015
Next Review Date:	May 2018
Departments Affected:	All Departments
Approved By/Date:	Board of Management May 2015
Lead Officer:	Aidan Ackerman, Director of Customer Services
Statutory Compliance:	- None

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Title: VOLUNTEER POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 The policy is a group wide policy. This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Mid-Wales Housing Association. It is of relevance to staff, clients, and Board Members of the organisation. The activities of Board Members in regard to their role as Board Members are covered under the Association's Membership and Code of Conduct Policies. It also includes a specific element with regard to the protection of children and vulnerable adults in regard to volunteering.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association is an organisation that works with all age groups. Mid-Wales Housing Association regards its duty of care in working with school age children, young adults and vulnerable persons, as extremely important. To ensure that our work is carried out in a way that protects all individuals working, volunteering or participating in our activities we ask the following:

- That all trainees and volunteers receive guidelines regarding health and safety of sites and activities; that they are familiar with all relevant policies in the induction packs and that they adhere to the advice contained within them.
- That wherever appropriate child protection training will be made available to trainees and volunteers.
- All trainees and volunteers involved in organising or delivering services to children or vulnerable adults through Mid-Wales Housing Association may be required to provide details of previous experience, particularly any experience that they have of working with children. Two references will be sought, one of which must be supplied by persons who have experience of the applicant working with children or young people if applicable. The decision on whether the matter is applicable under the particular circumstances rests with the Community Participation Officer or Community Housing Team Leader who will then liaise with the Human Resources Manager. For example, attendance to a Tenants' and Residents' Forum meeting would not require any references or checks, but a volunteer who sleeps over at a residential activity centre with the children of tenants may require a higher level of consideration.
- It will be made clear to all those applying to work with Mid-Wales Housing Association in a paid or voluntary capacity, that the work may involve contact with children and vulnerable persons. Vulnerable groups are those under the age of 18 under the care of Children's Services or 16, and those of all ages with disability, diagnosed mental health problems, or infirm.
- Details of any criminal convictions against children are required under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Information supplied will be dealt with confidentially.
- If applicants as volunteers are unknown to members of the organisation they must provide evidence of identity.

- All volunteers where appropriate will undergo checking procedures by the DBS where they are working with children or vulnerable adults.
- Money will not be paid to volunteers except to cover expenses.

3. Value of Volunteering

- 3.1 Volunteers are an established and integral part of the work of Mid-Wales Housing Association. Inviting people from the community into our organisation ensures that we have the community's support and input into our activities. Volunteering provides benefits which are above and beyond those supplied by statutory services, and which improve the quality of people's lives. Without the involvement of volunteers in this organisation we would not be able to provide a range of services and activities. The primary volunteers to the Association are Board Members and tenants. However, volunteering is open to the wider community.
- 3.2 Mid-Wales Housing Association is committed to working with volunteers to meet its purpose and objectives. Volunteering involvement in appropriate tasks is welcome, encouraged, developing at all levels of the organisation's activity.

4. Values and Principles

Mid-Wales Housing Association:

- 4.1 Recognises volunteering as a means of fulfilling its purposes and of being of benefit to all people by providing access from the community through volunteers.
- 4.2 Values volunteering as an inclusive act of participation that is itself important in promoting the work of the organisation.
- 4.3 Appreciates that volunteering is enjoyable and can change and enrich the lives of individuals. Successful volunteer involvement takes account of individuals' motivations, aspirations and fulfilment.
- 4.4 Acknowledges volunteering as of wider benefit to society and its beliefs and values.
- 4.5 Will endeavour to match volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience and motivation in a way that best meets the organisation's needs.
- 4.6 Respects volunteers in both listening to and learning from what they have to say.
- 4.7 Values and respects the individual through providing equal opportunities for active involvement within the scope of the organisation's needs and resources.
- 4.8 Values volunteering as integral to its work at all levels and recognises the gifts of time from volunteers as critical to its well-being and success.
- 4.9 Distinguishes volunteering from employment, and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

5. Definitions

- 5.1 A volunteer is someone who, without expectation of financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of Mid-Wales Housing Association.
- 5.2 The importance of maintaining a balanced, effective and mutually beneficial staff/volunteer partnership is essential. It is based on the principle that staff provide structure, organisation, direction and day-to-day management together with appropriate levels of accountability, while volunteers add value to the organisation's work by performing a wide range of supportive roles, contributing time, flexibility and specialist skills. Within this framework, volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by Mid-Wales Housing Association and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment.
- 5.3 The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give, or be set a minimum amount of time or carry out the tasks provided. Likewise, Mid-Wales Housing Association cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken.
- 5.4 Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation – as well as attainment of the high standards on which the organisation's reputation depends. The Community and Tenant Engagement Policies approved by the Association's Board in January 2015 set out the means by which tenants may be rewarded for undertaking volunteer work.
- 5.5 Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by.

6. Support for Volunteers

- 6.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association acknowledges the need for a clear, consistent organisational framework for voluntary involvement, which creates a positive climate for engagement by volunteers.
- 6.2 Each volunteer has a designated member of staff or volunteer to guide and advise them in their tasks. Volunteers are told who to approach for support and have regular access to that person.
- 6.3 The designated volunteer manager is responsible for the effective deployment and development of day-to-day voluntary activity. For example, when Tenant Service Auditors are used to review a service they will be supported in this role by a member of staff.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association will maintain the confidentiality of all personal customer information and not disclose it outside of the Association without the permission of the customer, unless legally obliged to do so. When working with the Association, volunteers will not have access to confidential data.

8. Recruitment and Selection

8.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability and religion. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks.

8.2 Volunteers may be asked to provide references and will be selected on their suitability for the volunteering tasks, matching volunteer's skills and interests with the organisation's needs. The Community Participation Officer or Community Housing Team Leader will decide if it is appropriate to take up references.

8.3 There is no lower age limit for the recruitment of younger volunteers provided they are able to make a useful contribution, they are undertaking suitable tasks for which there is no legal minimum age, they are supervised and not left alone, and a parent or guardian has given permission if they are under eighteen.

8.4 There is no upper age limit and the organisation recognises the valuable contribution made by older volunteers in terms of knowledge and experience.

8.5 Volunteers will be invited for an informal interview where a mutually suitable role will be identified. Volunteers may be asked to provide references, and may be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if the position involves working with children or vulnerable adults. The decision on the necessity of a DBS check will be made between the Community Participation Officer or the Community Housing Team Leader and the Human Resources Manager.

8.6 Volunteers have a clear and concise description of their role and tasks. The volunteer manager (dependent on the activity) prepares these after discussions with the volunteer. The underlying principle is the identification of real need for a task to be undertaken.

9. Training and Development

9.1 New volunteers are made to feel welcome and provided with a copy of the Volunteer's Pack which includes aims and objectives of the organisation plus an introduction to relevant policies such as the volunteering policy, health and safety, equal opportunities, confidentiality, and settling differences. An induction plan relevant to their role will also be included. This need not be onerous and can be quite straightforward and limited to one side of A4 paper.

9.2 The development of training and support for volunteers is a priority for the organisation in order to provide them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks.

- 9.3 Examination of the effective involvement of volunteers will form part of the organisation's annual review of its activities and will be reported upon.
- 9.4 The views of staff, volunteers and service users will be sought to identify opportunities to develop volunteering

10. Conditions of Service

- 10.1 The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.
- 10.2 Personal accident insurance is in force for the benefit of volunteers and claims are made at the discretion of Mid-Wales Housing Association.
- 10.3 The organisation does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage.
- 10.4 Personal information recorded about volunteers is stored and maintained with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality. Volunteers are informed of their rights, under data protection legislation, to have access to personal records.
- 10.5 The organisation advises volunteers of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information about the organisation which is not public knowledge. The organisations Confidentiality and Data Protection policy applies.
- 10.6 The organisation recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time. Exit interviews are offered to ascertain why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether they may want to be involved again in the future.

11. Dispute Settlement

- 10.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The volunteer manager is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints. They seek to ensure the volunteer's views are heard, noted, acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences. A volunteer is able to use the Association's Complaints Policy should they choose.

12. Rights and Responsibilities

- 11.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association recognises the right of volunteers to:
- Know what is expected of them;
 - Be paid expenses;
 - Be insured;
 - Have safe working conditions;
 - Have clearly specified lines of support and supervision;
 - Know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong;
 - Have the opportunity for personal development.
 - Be trained;
 - Be free from discrimination;
 - Be shown appreciation;
- 11.2 In return volunteers are expected to:
- Be reliable;

- Respect confidentiality;
- Be honest;
- Make the most of training and support opportunities;
- Carry out tasks in a way which reflects the aims and values of the organisation;
- Work within agreed guidelines and remits.

13. Introduction to Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults in regard to Volunteering

13.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association seeks to provide the highest possible standards of customer service. This includes the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This policy is not intended to cover the service provision or the delivery of supported housing services nor the delivery of housing services such as gas servicing of a property which might be undertaken by a third party acting for Mid-Wales Housing Association. These items are covered in other policies. Rather, this policy is intended to protect these clients when they engage with the Association in regard to community engagement policies and service delivery by volunteering. At the point of procurement the Association will satisfy itself that any partner or third party organisation satisfies the position of Mid-Wales Housing Association in regard to Children and the Protection of Vulnerable Adults.

14. Definition of Children and Vulnerable Adults

14.1 A child is a person under 16 years of age unless they are protected by Children's Services as their guardian, in which case they will be considered as a child up to the age of 18. A vulnerable adult is a person who is vulnerable due to a circumstance such as mental ill health, learning difficulties, physical or sensory disability. This definition of vulnerability is not exhaustive and may vary due to the circumstances of the individual involved.

15. Service Provision

15.1 The Association's other policies on service provision remain in operation and will be the default position on service provision.

15.2 This policy enables the member of staff to take into account the individual circumstances of the tenant or client and their wellbeing. The wellbeing of the child or the vulnerable adult is the trigger for a decision on improving service delivery.

16. Reporting Concerns - Procedure

16.1 Any volunteer or paid individual who has concerns about the well-being or physical condition of a child or vulnerable person that they are in contact with whilst working with or through Mid-Wales Housing Association should seek the advice of the Community Housing Team Leader, who will consult with the Director of Customer Services.

- 16.2 Responsibility for ensuring general safety whilst working lies with volunteers and paid individuals equally. Foresight and initiative prevent accidents. All accidents must be recorded in the Accident Book and all incidents (e.g. conflicts or bullying) must be recorded in the Incident Book.
- 16.3 Volunteers or paid employees who do not feel happy with a situation should voice their concerns to the Community Housing Team Leader and, if nothing is resolved, must go to the Director of Customer Services.
- 16.4 It is the responsibility of the Community Housing Team Leader after consultation with the Director of Customer Services to pass the information to either the Police or Social Services as is considered appropriate.

17. Prevent Abuse by means of Good Practise

- 17.1 The layout of sites and session planning for activities must enable constant supervision of all children and vulnerable persons.
- 17.2 All children and vulnerable persons will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence, through support in making choices, and finding words to describe their own feelings and manageable ways of expressing them. This will enable them to work towards resisting inappropriate approaches, and help them react calmly and assertively in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable.

18. Dealing with allegations against employees, trainees or volunteers

- 18.1 It is important to deal with any allegations by children, young people, vulnerable adults or their parents/carers straight away.
- 18.2 Any allegation must be taken seriously and reported to Social Services or the Police, who will investigate if they consider appropriate.
- 18.3 The matter will be reported to the Community Housing Team Leader in the first instance unless the matter relates to a member of staff in which case it will be reported to the Manager of Human Resources who will investigate complaints against members of staff.

19. Confidentiality

- 19.1 Mid-Wales Housing Association will **maintain the confidentiality of all personal customer information** and not disclose it outside of the Association without the permission of the customer, unless legally obliged to do so. Any concerns should be shared only with those who need to know, i.e. the Community Housing Team Leader and Director of Customer Services, who may inform the teacher or Service Provider Coordinator, parents or Social Services. Reference should be made to the Association's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy.

20. Disclosures

20.1 Children and young people will talk to adults who they trust. This could include disclosing abuse to an adult or another child. When this situation arises, follow these steps:

The named person will be responsible for dealing with disclosure or suspicion of abuse. This person will be responsible for recording information and contacting the relevant authority.

- i) Receive Listen to what is being said.
 Accept it.
 Do not display shock or disbelief.
 Take notes.

- ii) Receive Reassure the child/young person but be honest.
 Don't make promises you may not be able to keep.
 Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer.
 Reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you. If the child/young person expresses guilt, point out that they are not to blame.

- iii) React Do not interrogate for further details.
 Do not ask leading questions (this can invalidate court evidence).
 Do ask open questions e.g. "Anything else you need to tell me?"
 Do not criticise the person the child is talking about.
 Do not ask the child to repeat what they are saying for someone else.
 Explain to them what you have to do next.

- iv) Record Make brief notes as soon as possible.
 Do not destroy original notes.
 Record the time, date, place, noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the 'actual' words used by the child/young person.
 Draw a diagram to show any marks/bruises.
 Record what is said rather than your assumptions.

- v) Remember Follow the guidelines in this Policy
 Consult with the appropriate person as soon as possible.
 Ask for support if needed, you have been dealing with a traumatic situation.

21. The named person

21.1 It is good practice for all organisations, however small, to identify at least one person to be responsible for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse. Everyone in the organisation should know who this is and how to contact them. At Mid Wales Housing Association the role is undertaken by the Community Housing Team Leader. This is consistent with the Association's policy on Domestic Abuse.

The role of the named person is to:

- receive information from employees, trainees, volunteers, Board Members children or parents and carers who have child protection concerns and record it;
- assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate;
- consult initially with a statutory child protection agency such as the local children’s services, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline, the Police, to test out any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns;
- make a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency or the Police.

It is not their role to decide whether a child has been abused or not.

This is the task of the children’s services department who have the legal responsibility, or of the NSPCC which also has powers to investigate child protection concerns. It is, however, everybody’s responsibility to ensure that concerns are shared and appropriate action taken.

The named person should be aware of the local statutory child protection network, the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and the existence of local child protection procedures.

The named person needs to be aware of the relevant contact numbers and addresses of the statutory agencies in their locality. If concerns arise, for example when away on a trip, contact should be made with local agencies whose details will be in the phone directory. Children’s services departments have an out-of-hours duty team so can be contacted at any time.

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. Telephone 0808 800 5000.

22. Review

22.1 The Association’s Volunteer Policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure its on-going relevance.

Strategic Risk Factors	Engagement with volunteers, in particular the Association’s tenants will help to ensure that the Association’s services are meaningful and appropriate.	
Equality Impact Audit	<i>How does/will this policy ensure needs are met fairly, particularly with regard to race, gender, disability etc?</i>	The option of volunteering is open to all irrespective of any protected characteristics.
	<i>Is it felt that this Policy might affect different groups adversely. If so what is the justification for this, and is it legally permissible?</i>	Not applicable.
	<i>Have any representative groups in the locality been asked for their opinion and if so what was the outcome?</i>	No.

Tenant Engagement	<i>How does/will this policy ensure the needs of tenants are met?</i>	This policy will be taken to T&RF for consultation.
	<i>How is it felt this Policy will impact on the rights and obligations of tenants?</i>	This policy will not impinge on any rights or obligations of tenants which is superseded in the tenancy contract.
	<i>Have tenants been consulted and were the outcomes of that consultation taken into account when considering the introduction of this Policy?</i>	This policy will be taken to T&RF for consultation.

SCREENING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed	Volunteer Policy
Names and roles of officer(s) completing this assessment	Aidan Ackerman Director of Customer Services
Section	Customer Services
Contact details of lead officer for this assessment	aackerman@mid-walesha.co.uk
Date SEIA completed	24/4/15

1. Aims and objectives of the project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed

		Action Points
Is this an existing project, policy, function or service, a review or a new proposal?		
What are the aims and objectives of the service?	The policy is to provide a structured approach for individuals to volunteer	Bring to the attention of Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Team Leader, and Human Resources Manager.
What are the main activities of the service?	Attendance at T&RF, Tenant Service Auditors, and other service engagement.	Existing volunteers will need to be made aware of the policy.
Will the service be contracted out or commissioned?	No	None
Will it be delivered in partnership?	No	None
Which staff members will carry out the function?	This will normally be the Community Participation Officer and the Community Housing Team but engagement with tenants will not exclusively remain with these staff.	Potentially all staff, for example volunteers may take on service charge responsibilities. They would need to come under this policy which would require an input by Finance and Maintenance.
Who is responsible for the service?	Director of Customer Services	Achieve approval by Board and T&RF. Disseminate policy.
Whose needs is this service designed to meet? How does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation?	This policy assists and protects volunteers	The policy requires volunteers to receive a volunteer's pack which will be the responsibility of the Volunteer Manager (any appropriate member of staff can perform the function of Volunteer Manager).

Are there any aspects of the service which will be governed by the service provider's judgement? If so, is there clear guidance for staff to prevent any bias?	The guidance in the policy is clear that volunteering opportunities will be open.	The policy prevents bias and will need to be implemented by staff.
At this stage is there anything about the service that you think could disadvantage or discriminate against people with protected characteristics or Welsh speakers?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex/Gender 	No	It may be that certain volunteer activities may be more appropriate for a particular gender to be engaged with. However, a current example does not readily come to mind. If however, tenants in the future were to become involved in counselling other tenants this may be a possible example.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Identity 	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual with a disability. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability <p>The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. This includes people with sensory and mobility problems, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health needs and people living with a serious health condition.</p>	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual with a disability. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity 	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to ethnicity. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and belief 	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual in regard to

		religion or belief. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
• Sexuality	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual in regard to sexuality. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
• Age	No – the policy makes it clear that there should be no age bias	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual in regard to age. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
• Pregnancy/Maternity	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual with a pregnancy or maternity. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities. Certain volunteering activities which are of a highly active nature may not be safe in the later stages of pregnancy such as the Staylitttle Activity Holiday. However, pregnant volunteers may be able to support a number of the activities if they wish.
• Marriage/Civil Partnership	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual in regard to marriage status. The Association need to ensure that volunteering is available to all who wish to engage in any activities.
• Welsh Language	No	There is no apparent discrimination in regard to an individual in regard to the Welsh language. The Association ensures that

		volunteering opportunities are advertised in Welsh.
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2. Equalities monitoring data and any other evidence

What does your equalities monitoring data tell you about this service? Consider data for access to the service (who is using and not using it), outcomes and satisfaction levels. Consider complaints and grievance data (by group).	The groups of volunteers for the consideration of policies at T&RF do not reflect the profile of Associations tenants (primarily older males). However, this profile is more engaged at events like the <i>Tenants' Fun Day</i> which attracts female tenants and children.	
Where are your data gaps and how do you intend to fill them in the future?	Profiling data needs to be improved. This is being considered by the Community Housing Team Leader although other staff are looking at this issue as well.	
Do you have any other evidence? E.g. national research, regional data.	No	

3. Level of Impact

Based on your evidence and your initial thoughts you will now need to make a judgement as to the potential overall level of impact this service could have on people with protected characteristics/Welsh speakers. At this point you will need to bear in mind your legal obligations under the relevant equalities legislation and Welsh Language Measure. In order to rate this service as low you will need to have strong evidence that there is or will be no differential impact on people with protected characteristics.

HIGH		FEIA required – refer to Equality Review Group
MEDIUM		FEIA required – refer to Equality Review Group
LOW	X	Provide Summary of SEIA within Board/Committee Report Implement agreed action points above.

4. Completion of assessment

Please list all staff, board members and representatives involved in the Assessment.

Name	Position	Signature
Aidan Ackerman	Director of Customer Services	