

VOLUNTARY ACTION SHETLAND - SHETLAND BEFRIENDING SCHEME

SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND SERVICE USERS

Supervision of Staff

In line with Voluntary Action Shetland's Policy – Staff Appraisal Policy and Procedure, the Shetland Befriending Scheme is committed to supporting and developing its staff to enable them to carry out their work effectively and to fulfil their potential, thereby providing the schemes volunteers and service users with excellent service.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that staff expect and receive appropriate support and training to enable them to do their job, meet agreed objectives, improve performance, and develop skills and knowledge. Line managers are responsible for providing such support and development opportunities, and this is done both informally, in the course of everyday communication, and more formally through structured induction, day to day line management, regular support and supervision and formal annual appraisal.

The Project Co-ordinator is responsible for conducting a formal yearly appraisal in line with Voluntary Action Shetland's Staff Appraisal Policy and Procedure. The appraisal is formally recorded with both parties agreeing to the record being accurate. Appraisals are stored in staff member's files in a locked filing cabinet in the Executive Officer's office. Only the Executive Officer has access to this filing cabinet and staff and the Befriending Scheme's Project Co-ordinator can request to view the appraisal documents at any time. Daily line management from the Project Co-ordinator is also provided and staff members are able to request a supervision session at any time.

The Project Co-ordinator is line managed by Executive Officer of Voluntary Action Shetland and a formal yearly appraisal provided. Regular on-going support is provided as and when required. This is not formally recorded.

Supervision of Volunteers from Scheme Staff

Befriending support is, on the whole carried out at a distance from the scheme – not directly witnessed by staff. Befriending can be isolating and stressful – and the needs and rights of both parties must be protected.

Volunteers need to feel as if they are getting something back for the effort they put in – in a personal, practical or social sense. It is for these reasons that appropriate levels of support and supervision are to be offered by scheme staff. Some support sessions are compulsory to attend within the scheme once a volunteer has committed.

The Shetland Befriending Scheme also recognises the importance of providing support to the service users as well as to volunteers whilst they are part of the scheme.

Support for Volunteers

Volunteers can expect and have the right to:

- Know what is expected of them and be given clear information about the tasks they are to undertake. All volunteers will be provided with a role and task description
- Be trained and receive ongoing opportunities for learning and self-development - Initial training is provided and a range of ongoing training opportunities are available such as one off training events and peer support sessions
- To know who is responsible for supporting and supervising them. Each volunteer will be given a designated Development Worker and they will provide support and supervision on a regular basis and will be available to the volunteer to contact as and when the volunteer needs, to discuss any issues or concerns
- Be free from discrimination whilst working with scheme
- Make suggestions to improve the service or to submit a complaint
- Be consulted on decisions that will affect them as volunteers with the scheme
- Withdraw from being a volunteer when they feel it is the right time to do so
- Request a reference from scheme staff when applying for other posts after having carried out a minimum of 6 months befriending support

The Support & supervision schedule for Volunteers will be:

- Contact after their first meeting with the service user
- At every 6 week stage
- A full review at every 3 month stage
- A full review at the end of a match

The purpose of support and supervision is to:

- Appreciate and value the volunteer by supporting and developing their work
- Help maintain the volunteer's input by providing emotional and practical support
- Reduce stress and isolation
- Monitor and evaluate the relationship and set goals for ongoing support, where appropriate

To ensure accountability of the service offered by the scheme through the volunteer, the scheme has set up support and supervision systems to check that:

- The volunteers are doing what they say they are, and what they are supposed to be doing
- The objectives of the befriending are being met
- The project's boundaries are being observed
- There is no exploitation on the volunteer or the service user – emotionally, physically, socially or financially

Individual Support Sessions with Volunteers

The role of befriender has the potential to be stressful. A befriending relationship has also the potential for both helpful and unhelpful dynamics. Volunteers may not in fact realise how they themselves or the service user are being affected, until they take the time-out to talk about it. It is for this reason that regular, support and supervision sessions are crucial for supporting a befriender.

Such regular sessions ensure an appropriate level of monitoring and evaluation is in place and that the service remains accountable for the volunteer's work. Support sessions will occur every 6 weeks with scheme staff and are compulsory for the volunteer to be part of once committed. Contact with the volunteer will also occur after the first meeting has occurred with the person they are matched with.

Overall the reasons for providing regular support and supervision sessions include:

- Accountability
- It allows building of a relationship with one designated worker

- It provides regular and reliable time to reflect on the dynamics of the relationship
- Discussion of the objectives and purpose of the relationship
- Discussion of the impact of the relationship on the service user
- Discussion of the impact of the relationship on the volunteer

Methods

In addition to individual supervision, there are a variety of other support methods that the scheme can offer which will help make volunteers feel valued. They also keep them motivated and involved, with an important sense of belonging to the scheme.

There are a variety of methods that the Shetland Befriending Scheme can offer, including:

- Face-to-face sessions
- Telephone/Mobile/Text link
- E-mail link
- Peer group support (see Group Support Sessions)
- Activity Group Sessions with volunteer and service user (See Group Support Sessions)
- Social events
- Practical help
- Training
- Access to information
- Personal development
- Out-of-pocket expenses

Any combination of these can be used and developed, as and when appropriate, by scheme staff and its volunteers.

The scheme also has an open door policy for volunteers to phone any time they feel the need to discuss things or require guidance and/or support on a situation.

Group Support Sessions

In addition to 1:1 support, there is also great value in providing opportunities to meet with other volunteers for group support sessions.

This offers the chance to discuss common issues, have peer support, and an opportunity to lessen the potential isolation of befriending. It also enables volunteers to feel part of an overall project. The group support sessions will occur a few times a year and are voluntary to attend.

The activity group sessions are also a very positive way to make the volunteers feels less isolated. Scheme staff will arrange group activities a number of times a year for volunteers and those they are matched with, to attend if they wish.

Support for Service users

Service users can expect and have the right to:

- Know how the scheme works and the extent of the support that can be provided – service users will receive a leaflet about the scheme
- Be treated with respect and have the ability to express their views on the type of input they receive from the scheme and the activities that they participate in
- Be consulted on decisions that will affect them
- To know who will support them whilst they are part of the scheme – as well as the volunteer, scheme staff will make contact with them on a regular basis to ensure that everything is progressing well. At any stage during their time with the scheme the service user (and if applicable their family or legal representative) has the right to contact the scheme staff to discuss any concerns
- Be clear about what is expected of them – a code of conduct will be discussed with the service user at the initial meeting
- Make suggestions to improve the service or to submit a complaint
- Be free from discrimination whilst on the scheme
- Withdraw from the scheme when they feel it is the right time to do

Contact will be made with those under 16 and their family:

- After their first meeting with the volunteer
- At the first 6 week stage
- A review at every 3 month stage
- Full review of goals at each 6 month stage
- A full review at the end of a match

Contact will be made with the 16+/60+ adult and their legal representative if applicable as appropriate:

- After their first meeting with the volunteer
- At the first 6 week stage
- A review at every 3 month stage
- Full review of goals at each 6 month stage
- A full review at the end of a match

The purpose of the contact with the service user is to ensure:

- Accountability
- It allows building of a relationship with one designated worker
- It provides regular and reliable time to reflect on the dynamics of the relationship
- Discussion of the objectives and purpose of the relationship
- Discussion of the impact of the relationship on them
- Discussion of the impact of the relationship on the volunteer