

## Volunteering Policy

### 1. **Introduction:**

A volunteer is a person who gives freely of their time, skills and experience without expectation of financial reward. Essex Family Forum recognises the immense benefits that volunteers bring and tries to offer a range of volunteering opportunities by assigning roles suited to interests, needs and capacity. Without volunteers, Essex Family Forum would not be able to provide the wide range of services on offer and therefore welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds to work alongside our staff team.

### 2. **Policy Scope:**

This covers any person recognised as an official volunteer of Essex Family Forum. A volunteer is not an employee and will not have a contract of employment with Essex Family Forum.

### 3. **Policy Purpose:**

This policy seeks to set the non-contractual expectations that both volunteers and Essex Family Forum may have of each other, in order for voluntary work to be fulfilling and beneficial to both the volunteer and Essex Family Forum.

### 4. **Policy Background:**

- 4.1 This policy is underpinned with regard to all relevant legislation to ensure safe and equitable volunteering opportunities with Essex Family Forum, such as, but not limited to, Health and Safety, Data Protection, and Equal Opportunities.

### 5. **Policy Guidance:**

- 5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with:
- Volunteer Agreement issued to the volunteer
  - Health and Safety policy
  - Essex Family Forum Safeguarding policy
  - Data Protection policy
  - Expenses and Remuneration policy

The above policies can be found on the Essex Family Forum website:  
[www.essexfamilyforum.org](http://www.essexfamilyforum.org)

## **6. Policy Wording:**

### **6.1 Status of Volunteers**

Volunteers are not employees of Essex Family Forum, nor should any employment relationship between a volunteer and Essex Family Forum be inferred. Volunteers will be given a Voluntary Agreement as a means of clarifications around expectations of the nature of voluntary work for Essex Family Forum. This is not the same as, nor intended to be inferred or evolved in to, a Contract of Employment.

### **6.2 Equal Opportunities**

Essex Family Forum is committed to Equal Opportunities and welcomes voluntary applications from any person who is a parent or carer of a child or young person with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), aged 0-25. The latter is a Genuine Occupational Requirement for the remit of Parent Carer Forums, whom, by their nature and purpose, are comprised of parents and carers of children with SEND, aged 0-25. This is defined within the Children and Families Act 2014.

If any volunteer requires extra support or reasonable adjustment in order to fulfil their voluntary duties, Essex Family Forum is committed to providing support accessible opportunities where possible.

### **6.3 Rehabilitation of Offenders**

Certain voluntary roles may require a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

Where this is not required for a voluntary role and a criminal conviction is legally deemed as 'spent' for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, this should not automatically be a barrier to undertaking voluntary work.

### **6.4 Insurance**

Essex Family Forum will ensure that volunteers are covered by their business insurance for purposes in connection with Forum activities. The insurance will not cover unauthorised actions or actions outside the Volunteering Agreement, particularly if the volunteer is negligent or has deliberately failed to follow instructions.

### **6.5 Health and Safety**

Essex Family Forum is responsible for the health and safety of volunteers. Volunteers should follow Essex family Forum's Health and Safety Policies/Procedures.

For particular note:

*Essex Family Forum CIC is a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales (no. 12537224) at County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford. CM1 1QH*

- Volunteers have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions.
- Volunteers should not act outside their authorised area of work.
- Volunteers should report all accidents to a member of the Essex Family Forum employed staff team or the Management Committee.
- Essex Family Forum will provide volunteers with appropriate guidance on any health and safety issues that arise.

## **6.6 Confidentiality**

Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about Essex Family Forum, its employed staff, its other volunteers, and the families who contact the Forum. Volunteers are expected to maintain the same high standards of confidentiality as employees and must not disclose confidential information or use it for their own, or another's, benefit. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is legitimately in the public domain, or where the law permits or requires disclosure.

## **6.7 Policies and Procedures**

Volunteers are expected to comply with all Essex Family Forum's policies while they are undertaking any of their volunteering duties. Volunteers are required to read all the relevant policies before commencing their duties.

# **7. Policy Procedure:**

## **7.1 Recruitment of Voluntary Workers**

Anyone wishing to volunteer for Essex Family Forum may approach a member of the Essex Family Forum team at one of our events or can email us at:

[hello@essexfamilyforum.org](mailto:hello@essexfamilyforum.org)

## **7.2 Assignment of Voluntary Opportunities**

Most voluntary opportunities in Essex Family Forum come under the remit Family Champion role, which can include engaging with other SEND families at events, feedback on service changes, as well as attendance at meetings. More about this role can be found out by visiting our website or discussing with a team member from Essex Family Forum.

Volunteers may be asked to apply for a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Check, dependent upon the nature of the volunteering opportunities available.

## **7.3 Managing Voluntary Commitments**

Essex Family Forum will agree voluntary opportunities with the volunteer and there will be an expectation that the volunteer will meet the requirements of that opportunity to the best of their ability and will adhere to the standards set out in the Voluntary Agreement issued upon joining Essex Family Forum.

However, the volunteer is free to refuse to fulfil the offer of voluntary opportunities and Essex Family Forum is not bound to provide the volunteering opportunities.

Once a voluntary opportunity has been committed to, there is a courteous expectation that both Essex Family Forum and the volunteer will give as much notice as possible if either party is unable to meet the commitment.

#### **7.4 Training**

When a volunteer joins Essex Family Forum, they will normally be assigned to the Family Champion Quadrant Lead for the area of Essex they live in.

Most of the work of Essex Family Forum relies on sharing honest and productive feedback from the volunteer's own experiences, as well as the experiences of others, where Essex Family Forum has the appropriate consent to share these anonymously. It is rare that specific training is needed to contribute to the work of the Forum, however volunteers can expect to be appraised of the context of any event or meeting they agree to attend and will normally be supported by a member of paid staff, or a more experienced volunteer, at the first event or meeting they attend. Volunteers will also have their designated Family Champion Quadrant Lead to refer to for information and support.

#### **7.5 Complaints**

If a volunteer has any concerns, these should initially be raised with their designated Family Champion Quadrant Lead. Ideally any complaints or areas of concern would always be resolved informally in the first instance. Where it is not appropriate to raise it with the Family Champion Quadrant Lead or the nature of the concern is sufficiently serious, the Essex Family Forum Complaints procedure may be used.

#### **Termination of Voluntary Workers**

Either Essex Family Forum or the volunteer has the right to terminate the Voluntary Agreement at any time. A formal notice period is not required for either party, however if the volunteer chooses to terminate and is committed to a voluntary assignment, then reasonable notice, as a courtesy, would be appreciated in order for Essex Family Forum to make alternative arrangements to cover the assignment. Essex Family Forum will also undertake to return the same courtesy where possible.

### **8. Approval and Review Dates:**

Approved on: December 2021

Approved by: Management Committee

Date for Review: December 2022