

 **Dorcas Befriending Project****VOLUNTEER POLICY**

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Dorcas Befriending Project Volunteer Policy

The Dorcas Befriending Project (DBP) is a small, independent charity that provides volunteer led befriending services to older and disabled adults, who are often isolated, in and around London N1 and Islington.

The Dorcas Project was first established in 2001 by the Canonbury Community Baptist Church and was principally funded by Islington Council. Unfortunately in June 2011, due to the difficult economic climate, the Dorcas Project lost its funding, and the then full time Project Co-ordinator was made redundant. After this some of the Dorcas Project's volunteers formed an Executive Committee to continue the excellent work of the Dorcas Project as a small charity. The Dorcas Project was renamed the Dorcas Befriending Project, and the first constitution was signed in September 2011.

The aims of the Dorcas Befriending Project are to:

1. Enhance the quality of life of older and disabled adults in our community.
2. Provide support and training to all of our volunteers.
3. Work with all relevant agencies in our community to help enhance the quality of life of older and disabled adults within our community.
4. Provide more opportunities for older and disabled people within our community to engage in meaningful social interaction to enhance their quality of life.
5. Provide an on-going befriending service to older and disabled adults within our community to enhance their quality of life.
6. Provide training and support to all of our volunteers to enable them to carry out a befriending service.
7. Carry out fundraising activities in order to support the befriending project and cover costs.

Befriending has been defined by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation as “supportive relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated”. In most cases this involves visiting with individual clients, although DBP also provides some light gardening services and art groups among other social interaction activities. The charity aims to ensure that all of our volunteers are adequately supported and supervised in their befriending. Our volunteers and clients are at the core of the DBP.

A volunteer may be described as an individual who uses their experience, knowledge and skills free of charge to help DBP to achieve its aims and objectives as stated within our constitution.

The DBP recognises and values the important contribution of our volunteers at all levels of management within the charity.

Why do we involve volunteers?

- To increase our contact with the local community we serve.
- To benefit from the skills, experience and perspectives volunteers bring with them.
- To offer our volunteers new skills and experiences.
- To ensure that our services meet the needs of our clients.
- To give back and contribute to building a stronger and better community and society to live, work, and play in.

Volunteering with DBP provides many benefits for our volunteers:

- The opportunity to contribute to the local community and enhance the quality of life of older and disabled adults within the DBP catchment area.
- Regular support and training opportunities.
- Regular social events.
- All of our volunteers are covered by DBP's insurance policy whilst carrying out the activities of the charity.

Principles

- DBP will ensure that all volunteers are fully integrated into the charity, and are made to feel welcome and valued.
- DBP's volunteers are not introduced to replace paid staff nor are they taken on a contract.
- DBP is committed to providing equal opportunities for all of our volunteers in line with our Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy.
- DBP will aim to identify worthwhile and satisfying opportunities for volunteers.
- This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required.

Volunteer Role Description

The volunteer role description will be discussed with you during your induction, in relation to the specific activities that you will be engaged in. These can be amended if there are any changes in circumstances.

If you become uncomfortable with any of the voluntary activities that you carry out for the DBP, please stop and speak to the Project Co-ordinator and/ or member of the Executive Committee as soon as possible.

The following is a list of tasks that you can become involved in, you do not have to do all of these tasks, and all activities will be agreed with you and agreed with your client before you start visiting with him/ her. There are many other ways for our volunteers to become involved with DBP, such as administrative and fundraising support, if you would like to.

Tasks:

1. To offer befriending, support and companionship through visiting clients in their homes, care homes or hospital settings.
2. To support clients by going on outings and to places of interest together (e.g. Local Park, the pub etc.), pushing a wheelchair if required.
3. To support clients in maintaining their home (e.g. light gardening, light decorating, cleaning curtains and windows, re-arranging furniture and possessions, helping to plan shopping).
4. To support clients in maintaining their health and income (e.g. supporting them when visiting the Doctor, filling in forms, helping clients understand their benefits/ entitlements, raising queries or making complaints).
5. To complete monthly volunteering logs and return these to admin@dorcas-befriending.org.uk in a timely manner.
6. To have regular reviews (at least annually) with the Project Co-ordinator and/ or designated member of the Executive Committee.
7. To comply with all of DBP's policies and procedures as outlined within the volunteer handbook, full copies are available on our website <http://dorcas-befriending.org.uk/>, including those for Safeguarding, Health and Safety and confidentiality.
8. To keep in regular contact with clients and to ensure they do all that is reasonably possible to honour each appointment.
9. To assist in general administrative duties (e.g. filing, completing files, sending out letters etc.) with support and supervision from the Project Co-ordinator and/ or a member of the Executive Committee.
10. To assist with fundraising activities (e.g. assisting with completing applications, helping with fundraising events, manning stalls etc.) with support and supervision from the Project Co-ordinator and/ or member of the Executive Committee.
11. To assist with other events (e.g. recruitment fairs, social events etc.) with support and supervision from the Project Co-ordinator and/ or member of the Executive Committee.

The following are list of tasks that you **should not** carry out for our clients:

1. Accompanying users to collect their pension.
2. Washing dishes.
3. Heavy decorating/ building work.
4. Hoovering or general cleaning.
5. General or main shopping (the odd item, or special shopping for ethnic foods, and if urgent e.g. due to bad weather are ok).

6. Personal washing, bathing or dressing or any aspect of personal care.
7. Repairing equipment/ appliances (e.g. wheelchairs).
8. Buying or giving medication.
9. Assistance with legal matters (e.g. Wills).

The above are the statutory responsibilities of the Local Council and Health Services. If your client requires additional support in these areas, refer them to the relevant services.

Code of Conduct

1. Volunteers will befriend and provide assistance/ support to a particular client for as long as both the volunteer and user are happy with the arrangement.
2. Volunteers will stay in touch with the user as often as they say they will, as agreed with the Project Co-ordinator and/ or member of the Executive Committee.
3. Volunteers will only undertake those tasks outlined in the volunteer role description and as agreed with the client, and will not undertake tasks that are someone else's paid job.
4. Volunteers will always respect and remember the client's right to privacy and confidentiality.
5. If a volunteer is unsure what to do when confronted with a problem or conflict of interest; they should contact the Project Co-ordinator and/ or a member of the Executive Committee for support and advice.
6. A volunteer will always check with the client as to what the client really needs.
7. Volunteers will respect equal opportunities for the client they work with, regardless of their ethnic origin, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability in line with our Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy.
8. Volunteers MUST NOT administer medication (e.g. giving tablets, eye drops, rubbing in creams, changing bandages etc.). If a client is unable to do this themselves then they should be referred back to their GP or District Nurse.
9. Volunteers should never leave their personal belongings (especially valuable) unattended in a client's home.
10. Volunteers should never borrow money / personal items from clients, nor should clients lend money / personal items to volunteers.
11. Volunteers should not give their personal address / phone number to clients.
12. Volunteers should always carry identification and produce it when necessary and appropriate.
13. Any changes in the well-being of the client or any issue of concern should be reported at once to the Project Co-ordinator and the leads for Safeguarding and Health and Safety, in accordance with the relevant policies.
14. Volunteers will keep accurate logs of their volunteering.

Recruitment

We will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers locally that take into account the principles of our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. The applicant will have to complete an application form and provide two references.

The applicant will be interviewed by the Project Co-ordinator and/or representatives of the Executive Committee and if this is successful the two references asked for will be applied to. During the interview DBP will discuss the applicant's interests, skills and experience and type of volunteering activities they would like to engage in to ensure that we can provide appropriate volunteering opportunities.

An enhanced criminal records check with the Criminal Records Bureau will be made for every volunteer. The costs for this will be covered by DBP. Having a criminal record will not be an automatic barrier to volunteering with us, as only relevant convictions will be taken into account. We can provide a copy of our policy on recruiting ex-offenders upon request.

The DBP will aim to help any volunteer overcome barriers that may make it difficult for them to volunteer at DBP, including providing assistance with completing forms and will cover any reasonable expenses in accordance with our expenses policy.

Induction

There will be an induction prepared and delivered by the Project Co-ordinator and or members/ representatives of the Executive Committee to enable the prospective volunteer to familiarise themselves with the work of the DBP, what we expect of our volunteers and what our volunteers can expect from the DBP. This will include:

- The role of the volunteer.
- An introduction to staff members and other volunteers as appropriate.
- A list of Executive Committee members.
- Copies of all the relevant policies including this Volunteer policy and, Confidentiality, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Diversity etc.
- Essential procedures i.e. timekeeping, volunteer logs, etc.
- Induction training and details of on-going training.
- Information about the relevant Code of Practice.
- Other information as appropriate.

All volunteers will be required to sign and accept a Volunteer Agreement which requires them to abide by the rules and principles of DBP. These will be clearly explained and copies of appropriate policies and procedures made available via the volunteer handbook and the DBP website <http://dorcas-befriending.org.uk/>.

There will be a trial period of 8 to 12 weeks to give the charity, the matched client and the volunteer time to discover if they are suited to each other, and will be reviewed as needed.

Volunteering

- All volunteers will be provided with all of the necessary information regarding their prospective clients, including any relevant health and safety precautions and the results of any risk assessments as appropriate.
- All volunteers will be introduced to their clients by the Project Co-ordinator and/ or Executive Committee member.
- All volunteers must commit to maintaining regular contact with their clients, and to do all that is practically and reasonably possible to ensure that they keep any appointments that they make.
- All volunteers must commit to keeping and submitting up to date logs, which must be submitted to admin@dorcas-befriending.org.uk on a monthly basis for the purposes of monitoring and funding.

Support and supervision

- All volunteers will have regular support and reviews from the Project Co-ordinator, and/ or Executive Committee members.
- The Project Co-ordinator and/ or a member of the Executive Committee will support all volunteers and will have regular meetings with the volunteers to discuss any problems or issues that may arise.
- The Project Co-ordinator (whether paid or un-paid) will receive support and regular supervision sessions from the Chair of the Executive Committee (or from another assigned committee member).
- A complaints policy exists to deal with issues that may arise and is available in the volunteer handbook and the DBP website <http://dorcas-befriending.org.uk/>.
- The DBP will ensure that volunteers are made aware of all relevant health and safety procedures and requirements, and will, as far as reasonably practicable, provide a safe environment for volunteers.
- Volunteers will be encouraged to express their views on matters concerning the charity. Their opinions will be sought concerning any changes or developments which may affect them, principally via direct consultation, routine review meetings and an annual general meeting.
- All volunteers will be kept updated via a newsletter, the DBP website and email as required.
- In line with our Data Protection Policy, the DBP will respect the privacy and confidentiality of volunteers and will not release any information about them without their agreement.

- The charity will supply a reference to any volunteer seeking other voluntary work or paid employment once they have been an active member of DBP for at least three months, and up to two years after leaving DBP.

Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, if required, will be reimbursed, including expenses for travel, and meals as covered by our volunteer expenses policy. In order to claim expenses, an expenses form must be completed and submitted to the Treasurer and/ or Project Co-ordinator within a month of the expenditure.

Health and Safety

The DBP has a health and safety policy in place on the DBP website <http://dorcas-befriending.org.uk/> and on request from the Secretary at secretary@dorcas-befriending.org.uk.

The DBP will ensure that volunteers are made aware of all relevant health and safety procedures and requirements, and will, as far as reasonably practicable, provide a safe environment for our volunteers.

Equality and Diversity

Our charity is firmly committed to equality and diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and benefit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our charity more effective in meeting the needs of all our interested parties.

We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards equality and diversity.

Insurance

The DBP has an insurance policy covering our volunteers in all aspects of our volunteering activities.

Confidentiality

The DBP works in an environment of the highest trust and confidentiality between the Charity, Trustees, Volunteers and Clients. It is, therefore, important that this trust and confidence is always maintained. Volunteers will be required to respect the charity's confidentiality policy.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

The relationship between the DBP and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the charity is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to our clients, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service.

If your role as a volunteer does not meet with the organisation's standards, we will use the following process:

1. Initial meeting with the Project Co-ordinator who will explain the concerns.
2. If this does not resolve the concern then a meeting with the Chair of the Executive Committee will be convened.
3. If your performance still does not meet with our standards then we shall have to stop using your services.

At all times you will be able to freely state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your circumstances with the charity you should:

1. Initially explain your dissatisfaction with the Project Co-ordinator.
2. If that does not resolve the concern then a meeting with a member of the Executive Committee should be convened.
3. If that does not resolve the issue then a formal meeting with the Chair of the Executive Committee should follow.
4. If after this, your dissatisfaction remains unresolved, and we are unable to resolve your grievance, then it would be inappropriate for you to continue to be a volunteer.

At all times you will be freely able to state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

Exit Procedures

- DBP reserves the right to terminate your volunteer relationship at any time if necessary. This will be done in writing. DBP will where possible try to give volunteers at least four weeks' notice of termination of the volunteering relationship but has the right to terminate the volunteer relationship without notice at any time without prejudice.
- If you wish to withdraw from your voluntary role you are asked to give as much notice as possible. DBP would appreciate at least four weeks' notice of you leaving your role but recognises your right to withdraw at any time.
- You will be offered an exit interview upon leaving your voluntary role at the DBP.

The DBP values the important contributions of all of our volunteers, and is grateful for the time and dedication they offer to their clients and DBP. The DBP places our volunteers at the heart of what we do. We would like to thank all of our volunteers for their time and the dedication that they show not only to DBP but also to our clients.

Author(s):	Kelly Rowley, Zakari Momodu
Approved by:	Executive Committee
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