**VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT AND POLICY**

**At Diverse Leap, with the commitment of our volunteers, we’re able to offer a support network based in the community for people who are experiencing the symptoms of depression (and other mental health disorders, including suicidal ideation) and who face significant barriers to employment, education and meaningful relationships.**

**To become involved with Diverse Leap, all that volunteers need are enthusiasm and a desire to help other people. Volunteers can choose how much time they give and the charity in return will provide accredited training in Mental Health First Aid and support. Volunteers are an essential part of our supportive community coming together to transform the lives of people otherwise at risk of being marginalized and underserved.**

**Introduction**

Diverse Leap is a small charity formed on 16 December 2021 with the aim of supporting people who are experiencing the symptoms of depression (or other mental health disorders). This aim is achieved through the provision of a place of safety where beneficiaries can be provided with free confidential advice, empathy, signposting to professional sources of treatment and practical support and activities to promote positive mental well-being...As such, volunteers carrying out our charitable purposes are likely to be in regular, and in some cases ongoing, contact with vulnerable adults (and potentially children[[1]](#footnote-1)). This policy covers Diverse Leap’s approach to all those who collaborate with us and applies to all volunteers, including trustees.

**Policy Statement**

This Volunteer Policy recognizes the significant and valuable role that our volunteers play in transforming the lives of people who are experiencing poor mental health and who struggle with the effects of medication. Volunteers play a crucial role in helping Diverse Leap to achieve our aims and we could not achieve anything without their commitment.

This policy reflects Diverse Leap’s commitment to our volunteers and sets out a framework of procedures and best practice which we will endeavour to follow when recruiting and working with our volunteers, to ensure that the expectations of both the charity and the volunteers are met.

**Diverse Leap Volunteers**

A Diverse Leap volunteer is someone who, unpaid and of their own free will, chooses to give their time, skills and expertise to support the charity in meeting its aims. This arrangement is voluntary on both sides. Diverse Leap’s relationship with volunteers is based on trust and is not intended to have the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than the reimbursement of some out-of-pocket expenses, is made to volunteers.

Diverse Leap volunteers support the charity in a number of ways, including:

* Listening to people who are in emotional or mental distress and supporting them to achieve a state of positive mental wellbeing;
* Providing a welcoming, safe and secure environment, for instance through administrative, publicity and catering support;
* Facilitating practical support activities (such as art, drama, music and mindfulness groups)
* Championing Diverse Leap by helping to spread the word and connecting the charity with the local communitie4s (initially within Gloucestershire) and potential partners;
* Raising funds, for example by helping to run events and promoting ways to give money
* Building the Diverse Leap community, for example by helping to recruit, train or support other volunteers.

Diverse Leap expects that our volunteers shall always aim to live the values of the Charity by empowering our beneficiaries to:

* **D**ivulge and off-load their concerns and take a leap into a more positive world;
* **I**dentify the reasons that are leading them to feel hopeless and/or lonely;
* **V**alue themselves, and other people around them;
* **E**xpound new theories, ideas and solutions as a community;
* **R**etrain and learn more about mental health; move from being a passive victim to being an active survivor;
* **S**elf-control achieved through developing coping skills; and
* **E**mpathy through the sharing of feelings with one another.

**Equality and Diversity**

Diverse Leap is committed to the benefits of equal opportunity and diversity and fully recognizes that people from differing backgrounds and life experiences will provide an enriched perspective which will enhance the level of support available to our beneficiaries. As the charity matures, therefore, we will seek to ensure that our volunteer cadre are fully representative of the communities they serve. Full details of our commitment, and our zero tolerance of discrimination and harassment, are included in the Diverse Leap Equality and Diversity Policy.

**Safeguarding**

Diverse Leap believes that everyone has the right to protection from abuse and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of everyone engaged in the breadth of its activities, including our volunteers. The Charity also has a zero-tolerance stance to any form of abuse. Full details relating to our approach to safeguarding are included in the Diverse Leap Safeguarding Policy.

**Recruitment**

Diverse Leap welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds to support our activity programme. We ask that all our volunteers are approachable, non-judgemental, patient, empowering, positive and, in the early days, accepting of last-minute changes to Diverse Leap programmes.

As Diverse Leap works closely with vulnerable adults, all volunteers need to be over the age of 18 and may require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates; if required these will be obtained by the charity.at no cost to the volunteer. Additionally, potential volunteers are likely to be required to attend a short and informal interview with the Charity’s Founder and Chief Executive Officer (Tara Leyshon) to provide relevant information and to explore their aspirations and the experience they can bring to Diverse Leap.

On acceptance, volunteers will be asked to sign a Volunteer Commitment (attached as an Annex to this policy). This is not intended to create any form of contractual agreement between Diverse Leap and the volunteer but sets out the expectations of our volunteers.

**Training and Support**

All volunteers will need to complete a 2-day accredited Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course prior to interacting on an individual basis with our beneficiaries; the costs of this training will be met by Diverse Leap. Every volunteer will also include induction training, including sessions on safeguarding and managing potential aggression.

Each volunteer will be provided with support from another member of the team or by the Chief Executive Officer or a trustee who is a chartered psychologist; this is important as Diverse Leap recognizes that prolonged interaction with a beneficiary in mental distress can swiftly lead to mental exhaustion on the part of the volunteer if not properly defused. All volunteers will also receive supervision and feedback whilst with Diverse Leap.

**Health and Safety**

Volunteers are expected to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst volunteering with Diverse Leap. As the charity does not (yet) have permanent premises, volunteers will need to ensure that they are aware of the health and safety risks and hazards in the host organisation’s location. Diverse Leap will ensure that, as far as is possible, volunteers are provided with the appropriate information, supervision and training required to enable them to complete voluntary work safely.

**Expenses**

The work of Diverse Leap is critically dependent on our growing network of volunteers. The Charity will, wherever possible, reimburse out-of-pocket costs on the terms outlined in the Diverse Leap Expenses Policy. However, if there are insufficient funds to cover these expenses, then the Board of Trustees must reserve the right to, regretfully, delay or defer reimbursement as outlined within the Expenses Policy.

**Insurance**

Diverse Leap will provide Public Liability Insurance cover for all volunteers whilst working on the Charity’s activities. However, it will not provide any form of Professional Indemnity cover for mental health professionals who volunteer to provide specific clinical or homeopathic interventions. Diverse Leap also does not provide motor insurance cover; however, all volunteers who hold a business class of motor insurance on a private basis (i.e., not simply for social or domestic use) may be provided with cover under their existing policy when engaged on Diverse Leap activities, providing that they have discussed this activity with their insurance company in advance.

**Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Diverse Leap will protect volunteer information in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Data will be held securely and will only be accessed by authorized individuals. Further details of our approach are outlined in the Diverse Leap Privacy Statement.

Volunteers should also be aware that confidentiality is guaranteed in any interaction with beneficiaries and must not be discussed with anyone outside Diverse Leap. There are, however, exemptions in the event of information being given that relates to illegal activity or to a substantive risk of harm to the individual (self-harm or suicidal ideation) or to other people. These matters should also be reported to the Chief Executive Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or, in extremis, direct to the Police or social services. Further guidance is contained in the Diverse Leap Safeguarding Policy.

**Feedback and Complaints**

Although Diverse Leap makes every effort to ensure that any experience of volunteering with the Charity is positive, we appreciate that volunteers at times may experience difficulty in their role or they may want to share feedback or raise an issue with a member of the management team or a trustee.

In the first instance, volunteers are asked to raise the issue directly with the Chief Executive either in person or via e-mail ([diverseleap@gmail.com](mailto:diverseleap@gmail.com)) or telephone (07553 080875). If the concern cannot be resolved through these means, or relates to discrimination or harassment, volunteers should pursue the issue through the complaints process outlined in the Diverse Leap Equality and Diversity Policy.

Conversely, there may be occasions where the management team may have concerns around a volunteer’s behaviour or approach. In this case, the Chief Executive Officer (or a trustee) will approach the volunteer directly to discuss any concerns amicably and openly, the aim being to resolve any challenges or difficulties at an early stage.

**Leaving Diverse Leap**

Volunteers are free to cease volunteering with Diverse Leap at any time but are asked to speak to the Chief Executive Officer so that they are aware; this can be done by e-mail or text if preferred. When deciding to finish volunteering with Diverse Leap, we ask that volunteers give us as much notice as possible to help us organize alternative arrangements.

There may also be times when Diverse Leap will ask a volunteer to stop volunteering with us. This may be due to changing role requirements or simply because a volunteer may, despite their own best efforts and training, simply be temperamentally unsuitable for their role. Should that happen, the volunteer will always be given the opportunity of an exit conversation with the Founder and/or a trustee and will be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees**

**28 January 2022**

**ANNEX – VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT FOR DIVERSE LEAP VOLUNTEER**

Involving volunteers in our work is important to us. We appreciate and value your volunteering and will do the best we can to make this experience enjoyable and rewarding. In order to support you in your volunteer role.

Diverse Leap is committed to providing all volunteers with the following

* Induction to the organisation and Mental Health First Aid training
* Support and guidance from all staff
* Payment of expenses, as detailed in the Diverse Leap Expenses Policy
* Adequate Public Liability insurance cover
* Good health and safety practice
* Full compliance with Equality and Diversity legislation

I, [Name]……………………………… agree:

* To be clear about the time I anticipate I can give
* To carry out my role to the best of my ability
* To keep the confidentiality of information I come into contact with
* To provide as much warning as possible whenever I cannot work when expected
* To adhere to the Diverse Leap policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct
* Accept guidance and supervision and be open to undertaking appropriate training

N.B. There will be an initial one-month period for both parties to decide if the role is the right one for you. This agreement is given in trust in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract.

Volunteer Signature: ……………………………………………… Date……………………:

Chief Executive Officer Signature ………………………………. Date ……………………

1. Diverse Leap services are aimed at adults (i.e., people over the age of 18. However, for the purposes of this policy, it is accepted that some young people may also seek to access services. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)