

Help to make a real **DIFFERENCE**

VOLUNTEER

**Volunteering
with VITAL**

This project is supported by:





This handbook and policy document is intended to serve as an information guide for new and current volunteers of VITAL.

The contents of this handbook are not listed in order of importance.

If you have any queries or concerns please feel free to discuss them with your Volunteer Coordinator.

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General Information

VITAL Contact Information:

VITAL
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Bradford
BD8 7JT

***Please note this is a PO Box address only.
We are currently working remotely.**

Working Hours:
Monday – Friday; 09:00 – 16:00
(preferably appointment only)

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General Email: hello@vitalprojects.org.uk

Volunteer Coordinator: Tracy Pickwell
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VITAL Team (as of 1/3/2024)

Sharon Cullerton - Director

Sara Firth - Chairperson of the Trustee Board

Tracy Pickwell - Volunteer Coordinator/Marketing Manager

Carol Greenwood - Finance Manager

Sam Jackson - Senior Community Advocacy/Forensic Advocacy

Rebecca Appleyard - Community Advocacy





Welcome & Introduction

VITAL (Formerly, Bradford and Airedale Mental Health Advocacy Group) is a user-led registered charity that aims to support and empower service users to have a voice. The services it provides are free of charge, confidential, non-judgemental and independent of statutory mental health services, such as the NHS and Social Services.

VITAL is truly an exceptional organisation to be part of. We are one of very few user-led organisations run and managed by people with personal experience of mental ill health and mental health services, either as a user or carer. This allows us a unique insight that can genuinely empower service users to shape their own lives. We also think that being user-led makes VITAL a very dedicated and motivated team, who really make a difference to the lives of marginalized and vulnerable people.

Volunteers are a crucial element of VITAL and their support and dedication is central to the organisation. Our Trustee Board, which carries overall responsibility for the organisation consists entirely of volunteers; whilst volunteer such as office workers, befrienders, fundraisers, trainers, marketeers & advocates allow us to extend the important services that we offer. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the team and hope that you find volunteering with us an enjoyable and positive experience.

This handbook defines the basis on which we involve volunteers and sets out what volunteers can expect when volunteering with VITAL. In doing so, VITAL also aims to demonstrate its commitment to volunteers by ensuring that they are treated fairly and with respect; and can benefit by acquiring new skills, increased confidence, and valuable experience.



Definition of a Volunteer

For the purposes of VITAL, a volunteer is defined as a person who willingly contributes time and effort to VITAL and does not receive financial compensation, other than out-of-pocket expenses.

While VITAL does not assume to compensate volunteers for their contribution, neither are there enforceable obligations on volunteers.

VITAL does not use volunteers to replace paid workers, but as a way of providing additional service and an opportunity for volunteers to gain skills, experience and confidence.

Volunteers can undertake several roles within VITAL, when appropriate and when work is available. However, volunteers are never obliged to accept the work offered to them and can discontinue their involvement with VITAL at any time.

VITAL also reserves the right to refuse, discontinue or reduce a volunteer's involvement within VITAL if their volunteering work becomes detrimental to their own or others' health; or detrimental to the reputation or safety of VITAL.

We are continually developing and would welcome any comments you have to improve both this handbook and the volunteer experience as a whole.



Reason for involving volunteers

We involve volunteers because: -

- Their contribution of time, skills and knowledge allows us to expand and improve our service provision.
- The direct experience of mental health difficulties (e.g. as a service-user, carer, worker, etc.) that many of our volunteers possess can enable greater understanding and empathy with clients; and inform planning and strategy.
- It can form part of a volunteer's path to recovery.
- It can help spread awareness and understanding of the service-user perspective of mental health issues.





The benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering for a user led mental health charity allows you to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals who are in need. By offering your time, skills, and support, you are directly contributing to the betterment of the mental health community.

Your commitment and involvement can provide hope and stability to those facing difficulties, which is incredibly valuable. As a volunteer, you can form meaningful connections with both the individuals you assist and fellow volunteers.

Volunteering not only aids others, but also positively impacts mental well-being. Research has proven that engaging in volunteer work can boost mood, lessen stress and anxiety, and enhance self-confidence. By prioritizing the needs of others and belonging to a supportive group, one can attain a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction. Moreover, volunteering can provide valuable skills and growth opportunities.



The benefits of Volunteering

There are so many benefits from volunteering and at VITAL volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Here are just a few of the **benefits you could gain from volunteering with us:**

1. Personal Growth & Development – Gaining experience in mental health advocacy, peer support, and charity operations can be personally and professionally rewarding.
2. Skills Development – Opportunities to learn skills from those who work within the sector.
3. Improved Mental Well-being – Helping others can be therapeutic and contribute to your own recovery journey.
4. Career Progression – Experience in a user-led charity can be valuable for those pursuing careers in mental health, social work, or nonprofit sectors.
5. Stronger Community Connections – Being part of a supportive network fosters meaningful relationships and a sense of purpose.

Impact to the wider community:

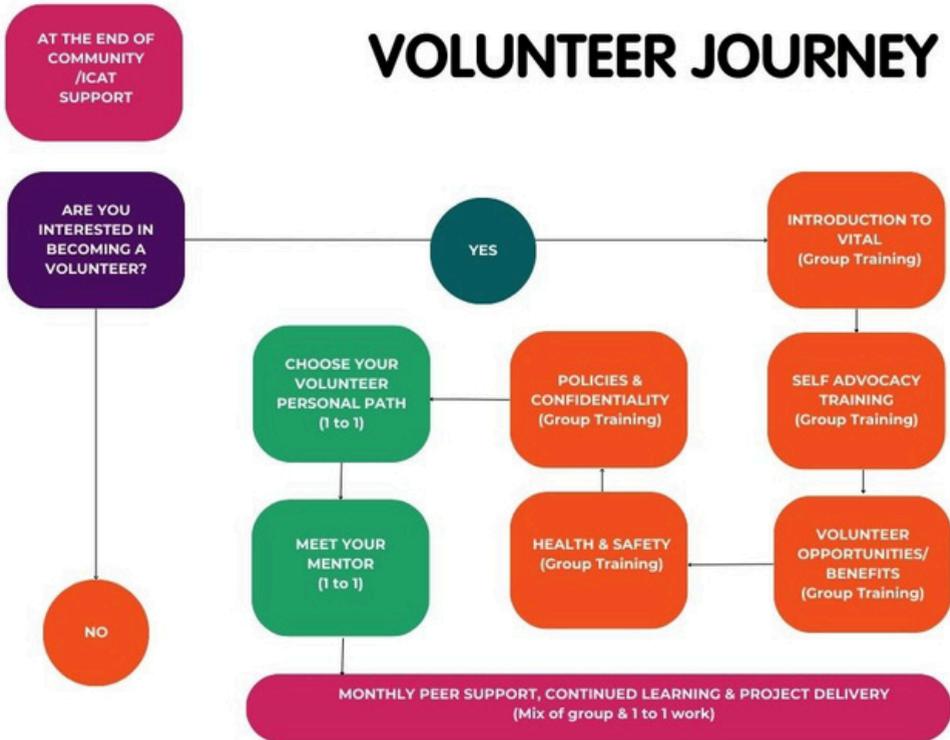
1. More Inclusive Mental Health Support – Ensures services are designed by and for the people who need them most.
2. Advocacy & Policy Change – User-led charities like VITAL play a crucial role in influencing mental health policies and services to better meet the needs of the community.
3. Cost-Effective Solutions – We provide essential services that complement mainstream healthcare systems, reducing pressure on public services.



Volunteering Opportunities

The opportunities to volunteer at VITAL, have recently changed, following the amazing funding support given to us from the National Lottery Community Fund.

This has enabled us to look at the Volunteer Pathway and really adapt it to ensure the volunteer is at the centre of their direction, growth, and development.





Volunteering Opportunities

Introducing the revolutionary way to give back to your community - with individual-led volunteering.

With this new approach, you have the freedom to choose how you want to volunteer. Whether you have a few hours to spare on a weekend or prefer to volunteer during the week, our new programme is designed to cater to your availability. And with a wide range of opportunities available, you can pick the type of volunteering that truly resonates with you.

Our programme offers the ability to create personalized volunteer projects. Whether you have a specific interest or want to contribute to the community, individual-led volunteering allows you to make a meaningful impact while utilizing your talents and passions.

Individual-led volunteering offers both flexibility and personalization, as well as a sense of ownership and empowerment. It allows you to take charge of your volunteer efforts, becoming an essential part of the solution and witnessing the direct impact of your actions. This sense of ownership not only benefits the community but also enhances your personal growth. Through individual-led volunteering, you can acquire valuable skills, build meaningful connections, and gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting your community.

Volunteering Opportunities



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Marketing

Are you ready to make a difference in your community while also boosting your marketing skills? Look no further than Marketing Volunteering - a program that combines social impact with personal development.

Our program is designed to not only provide valuable opportunities for volunteer work, but also to enhance your marketing skills through hands-on experience. As a Marketing Volunteer, you will have the chance to work with the Marketing Manager to help them to increase their reach and impact of the charity.

Our program is designed to attract a diverse range of volunteers, from people with no experience to students looking to gain practical experience. This gives you the unique opportunity to learn from others while also sharing your own knowledge and skills.

Projects include:

- Website content and development
- VLOGS & Blogs
- Social Media/Campaigns
- Design
- Marketing Communication including emails & Newsletters
- Videos

This innovative program combines the power of fundraising with the joy of volunteering, creating an unparalleled opportunity for individuals to give back and make a difference. Whether you're a seasoned volunteer or new to the world of fundraising, this program is perfect for anyone looking to make a meaningful contribution to society.

From organizing events to creating online campaigns with the marketing team, our volunteers have the opportunity to get hands-on experience in all aspects of fundraising. And the best part? All the funds raised go directly back into to the charity, making a direct and tangible impact on the cause.

Projects could include:

- Fundraising events
- Campaigns inline with key national/international events
Mental Health Week, Stress Month, Will Writing Month etc.
- Crowdfunding
- Bid writing
- Working with individual fundraisers
- Legacy donations
- Corporate donations

As a user led charity, we understand the importance of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who are crucial to the success of our cause. That's why we support volunteers to represent VITAL at involvement events.

We recognise the service users are not spectators, but valued contributors.

What are involvement events?

They bridge the gap between service users and service providers. They can bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and healthcare providers, to engage in meaningful dialogue with service users. This creates a unique opportunity for service users to directly influence policies and services that affect their lives, ensuring that their needs and perspectives are taken into account.

As a charity, we recognize and highlight the achievements & struggles of service users. These stories of determination, resilience, and progress serve as inspiration to others, showing that service users are powerful agents of change.

Volunteer befrienders work on a one-to-one basis, offering friendship and support to people with mental ill health who are isolated and suffer social exclusion.

Befrienders aim to help people: -

- Make positive use of their time and achieve their goals
- Access community resources
- Become more socially included
- Improve their self-esteem, self-confidence and well-being

Peer befriending has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health. By providing a non-judgmental and supportive relationship, befriending can help to improve self-esteem, confidence, and overall well-being. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who may be struggling with mental health issues or facing challenging life circumstances. Befrienders serve as a source of comfort and stability, offering a safe space for service users to share their thoughts and feelings.

In addition to the benefits for service users, befriending also has a profound impact on volunteers. By giving their time and energy to help others, volunteers experience a sense of fulfillment and purpose. Befriending allows them to make a positive difference in someone's life, and in turn, enrich their own. Volunteers also gain valuable skills such as communication, empathy, and patience – qualities that are highly sought after in today's society.

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Office Support

We are on the lookout for individuals who possess a vibrant and friendly personality, to become a valuable part of our team and support us in our daily operations.

As a volunteer, you will work alongside our experienced team, learning firsthand the ins and outs of office life.

Your role as a volunteer will involve a variety of tasks, all aimed at enhancing your skills and providing you with a well-rounded experience. You will be an integral part of the team and the face of our organisation, offering a warm and friendly welcome to visitors and ensuring they feel right at home.

You could help with:

- Answering phone calls & taking messages
- Signposting
- Logging incoming and outgoing post
- Photocopying
- Typing up notes
- Filing
- Managing website enquiries

6 Mental Health Advocacy

Mental Health Advocacy: Involves working in the community with the aim of empowering service users by supporting and enabling them to: -

- Express their views and concerns
- Access information and services
- Explore choices and options
- Signposting clients to other appropriate services
- Defend and promote their rights
- Oppose stigmatisation and discrimination

Advocacy covers a wide range of support. Volunteers will have the opportunity to learn about advocacy in specific areas e.g. benefits, PIP, Housing.

ADVOCACY



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Self Advocacy Training

Self Advocacy Training is a brilliant tool to help empower individuals to become their own advocates. It is designed to provide participants with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to effectively navigate systems, assert their rights, and make their voices heard.

Through a combination of interactive workshops, group discussions, and hands-on activities, participants will develop a deep understanding of their rights and how to effectively advocate for themselves. They will also learn valuable communication and problem-solving skills that will help them overcome any challenges they may face.

As a Volunteer Trainer you will have the opportunity to work & connect with others who share similar experiences, forming a network of peer support that can be invaluable on their journey towards self-advocacy. This sense of community not only provides a safe space for individuals to share their stories and struggles, but also serves as a powerful source of motivation and encouragement.

But perhaps the most remarkable benefit of the Peer Support Self Advocacy Training is the transformation it brings to individuals who participate. Individuals have emerged from this program with a newfound sense of confidence, self-worth, and determination.

If you have a passion and a desire to make a difference, we are here to support you every step of the way.

Our volunteer projects are designed to be flexible and cater to your interests and availability. Whether you have a few hours to spare or are looking for a longer-term commitment, we have a range of projects that you can get involved in. This allows you to make a difference on your own terms, without feeling overwhelmed or constrained by a strict schedule.

Is there something different you want to bring to the charity. Maybe you are an artist, a budding film maker, interested in wellbeing, research or simply feel your skills would bring a new dimension to the charity.

Have a chat with us. We welcome new ideas and if your idea works with the charity's strategy we will help to support you deliver the project.

This project is supported by:

