



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK 2025

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ABOUT US

Who We Are

Balance is a charity based in southwest London. We have more than ten years' experience providing person-centred support and services for adults with learning disabilities and enduring mental health needs.

Our Mission

Balance's mission is to become a sustainable deliverer of high-quality support to enable adults with learning disabilities to become less reliant on services and reach their potential.

We do this by:

- Supporting people to live safely and healthily in their own homes
- Providing the tools and opportunities that people need to live independently
- Ensuring people have choice and control over the support they receive



ABOUT US

What We Do

Our Charity provides a range of services that include:

- Support work and mental health services for people with mental health needs
- Supported living in shared community-based homes
- Outreach and independent living services
- Community and place-based day opportunities
- Supported Employment
- Vounteering and community partnerships

Our Values

- Our values underpin who we are and how we work
- They recognise that Balance is a complex organisation with a range of internal and external audiences
- They articulate our intention to build an adaptable organisation, one that recognises the contribution that all participants bring to shaping its resilience and accountabilities
- Our staff use these values to reflect on their work and to set development goals to ensure they are part of our everyday work.



OUR SERVICES

Outreach

Our outreach service is a specialist community-based provision, supporting people with a range of complex support needs including learning disabilities, mental health illness or autism living in southwest London.

Supported Living

Our supported living service supports adults with mid-moderate learning disability, or autism, living in shared accommodation across the borough of Kingston. The service operates in its own properties but will also provide one to one support as an outreach function elsewhere.

Supported Employment

We have a supported employment service for people who have a learning, physical or sensory disability and who live in the boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea or Westminster.



OUR SERVICES

Horticulture Services

Stud Nursery, our community garden, is a social enterprise and training resource offering a welcoming and supportive environment for people to learn and develop skills, confidence and friendships.

Day Opportunities Services

We have two day centres in the borough of Wandsworth to support people with a range of complex and often multiple-support needs. The service provides a range of one-to-one and group-based activities to people with diverse personalities, interests and skills.

Volunteering and Community Partnerships

We work with a range of development and support organisations to build our skills and capacity available to those using and benefiting from our services. We have a particular emphasis on growing our volunteer base and its influence on what we do and how we do it.





OUR COMMITMENT

We want to you have a positive, fulfilling experience when you are volunteering with Balance, and we will ensure the following:

- You will also be treated with respect, consideration and without discrimination.
- You will be covered by proper insurance when carrying out your agreed volunteering tasks with us.
- You will have one-to-one meetings with your supervisor to regularly check-in with you.
- You feel welcomed to your service area and integrated fully as part of the team.
- You are reimbursed for expenses (as appropriate / agreed with your supervisor).
- You have a role profile and clear understanding on your volunteering tasks.
- You have appropriate training and opportunities to shadow staff to develop your skills.
- You have opportunities to feedback and contribute to service development.

Our services are enhanced by your time, dedication and skills.



YOUR COMMITMENT

As a volunteer with Balance, you are in a position of trust. You will be supporting and sharing spaces with vulnerable people. You may be using some of our equipment. We ask that you are respectful at all times.

Some procedures will vary according to where you volunteer with us, but many will be the same for all staff and volunteers. Please ask a member of our staff if there is anything you are unsure of.

We invest in our volunteers, so we need you to be reliable in your commitment to us. If you are unable to make your planned time, please let us know as soon as possible.

The training programme we provide is an important part of ensuring you have right skills and knowledge for your volunteering tasks so you will need to complete it within a timeframe agreed with your supervisor.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is the duty of all volunteers whilst at work to:

- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions and how they perform their work activities.
- Adhere to the procedures both within the Health and Safety Policy and other associated policies and procedures related to the control and management of all working environments across the business.
- Co-operate with Balance's operational and governing leadership to enable them to carry out their statutory health and safety responsibilities.
- Report accidents, incidents and near-misses to the appropriate line manager or senior member of staff, as well as any situation, work practice or procedure which they recognise to be potentially hazardous.
- Use as instructed, and not misuse in any way, personal protective equipment;
- Comply with any reasonable health and safety instructions, both verbal and written, which are issued to them;
- Use machinery, plant or equipment in line with any training given and that strictly adheres to all instruction and recommendation on its use.



SAFEGUARDING

Balance recognises that it has a moral and legal duty of care to those we support and work with. As such, Balance is committed to providing and maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all our employees, people who use our services, volunteers and any other persons who may be affected by our activities.

We will ensure that you are given adequate training and supervision to perform your volunteering duties competently and safely.

Balance recognises that the adults we support can suffer abuse, ill treatment and discrimination and this is an infringement of their human and civil rights. The primary aim of the Safeguarding Policy is to prevent abuse from taking place.

Please ensure you are familiar with the full Safeguarding Policy. [You can view it here](#)



SAFEGUARDING

The role of our volunteers when a safeguarding event happens is to:

- **Respond quickly**
 - If the person at risk is in immediate danger it may be necessary, even before reporting, to take action to ensure their safety by calling for the emergency service(s) or for urgent medical attention or by removing them to a safe place.
- **Report as soon as possible**
 - Failure to report could result in forensic evidence being lost/contamination of investigation.
- **You must not discuss** your suspicions or what you have witnessed with anyone other than a manager.
- In case of sexual assault, you must **preserve evidence** by ensuring the person does not bathe, change their clothes or take fluids before being medically examined.
- **Be factual when reporting**
 - Record notes accurately by recording times, dates, names and signatures. Use full names, dates and timings; this must be legible, and signed and dated.
- **Record exactly what has been said**
- **Distinguish between fact and opinion**
- **Do not ask leading questions**, this can also jeopardise investigations
 - If unsure, seek advice from a Team Leader or Manager.
- **Do not take photographs of injuries**

No Decision Without Me

‘No decision about me, without me’ means that an adult has the right to know about how Balance and other agencies can work with them to find the right solutions to keep people safe and support them in making informed choices.

Making safeguarding personal means that an agency’s work with adults should be person-led and outcome-focused. It means engaging the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control, as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

Everyone’s Responsibility

- All staff and volunteers must understand their role and responsibilities regarding this policy and procedure and must know how to recognise abuse and how to report and respond to it.
- All volunteers have a duty to report, in a timely way, any concerns or suspicions that an adult at risk is being or is at risk of being abused and to gain the consent of the adult where possible or, where this is not possible, to make a best interest decision to report without consent.
- All concerns and suspicions that an adult at risk is being or is at risk of being abused by a member of staff or a volunteer, must be reported even if consent is absent.
- Actions to protect the adult from abuse should always be given a high priority with dignity, safety and the well-being of the individual a priority within the actions.
- Concerns or allegations must be reported without delay and given a high priority.
- As far as possible, Balance staff and volunteers must respect the rights of the person causing harm. If that person is also an adult at risk, they must receive support, and their needs must be addressed.
- All staff and volunteers must undertake the relevant levels of safeguarding training in line with the Balance training plan.

OUR SAFEGUARDING LEAD

All staff and volunteers within Balance, whatever the setting, have a key role in preventing abuse or neglect occurring, and in taking action when concerns arise.

You can view our policies and procedures [here](#)



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CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct sets out principles by which the charity is bound. These principles are as follows:

- We comply with laws and regulations.
- We reject bribery and corruption and avoid being compromised by gifts and entertainment.
- We avoid conflicts of interest.
- We respect the confidentiality of personal and corporate information.
- We promote diversity and equality and treat people fairly and with respect.
- We maintain a safe and healthy environment for people to work in and are proactive in managing our responsibilities to the environment.
- We support those who have any suspicions of any misconduct, malpractice, illegal or unethical behaviour and report their concerns in confidence to the appropriate channels.





VOLUNTEER EXPENSES POLICY

Balance will reimburse the travel costs of volunteers. This is to ensure you are not out of pocket for volunteering with us. This will be discussed and agreed with your supervisor in your induction.

Volunteers must retain tickets / receipts as evidence of their costs. Oyster card users should print out their journey history from their online account.

Evidence must be provided for the following reasons:

- To ensure that the correct payment is being made for justifiable expenses incurred when volunteering with us.
- To ensure tax and benefits regulations from HMRC and DWP are complied with fully.

Volunteers must record their expenses on our Volunteer Expenses form to be signed off by your supervisor along with receipts / Oyster card account print outs. Volunteers will need to provide back details as expenses will be paid by electronic payment.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

In addition to the policies detailed in this document, we would also like to highlight some other Balance policies which may be of use to you. If you would like any further information about any of Balance's policies, please talk to your line manager.

Data Protection Policy

- Our data protection principles and commitment to common law and legislative compliance
- Procedures for data protection by design and by default

Data Security Policy

- Physical Access procedures
- Digital Access procedures
- Access Monitoring procedures
- Data Security Audit procedures
- Data Security Breach procedures

Complaints Policy

- Complaints procedure
- Compliments procedure

**You should
receive these
policies in your
induction pack.**





CONTACT INFORMATION

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