

Volunteer Support, Supervision and Review Policy

<i>Reference:</i>	
<i>Date Approved:</i>	February 2015
<i>Approving Body:</i>	
<i>Implementation Date:</i>	February 2015
<i>Version:</i>	
<i>Supersedes:</i>	
<i>Consultation Undertaken:</i>	Consultation with Association Visitors
<i>Target Audience:</i>	Staff and Volunteers
<i>Review Date:</i>	January 2016
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Volunteer Support, Supervision and Review Policy

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1. Policy Statement of Intent

Support and supervision are essential in providing volunteers with guidance, performance feedback, development, direction and a sense of value in carrying out their role. It is a mechanism for monitoring and maintaining accountability to the organisation. It also has a major role in developing a consistent and effective service, supporting personal and professional development and managing the emotional impact on volunteers.

In most cases, support and supervision are “*separate but overlapping managerial functions. Supervision deals with the work itself; support deals with the worker. In reality of course, they cannot very easily be separated*”. (Adirondack, 1998)

Supervision deals with day-to-day work, while annual reviews plan for longer term considerations. The annual review should link to, and draw on, the content of supervision activities and records.

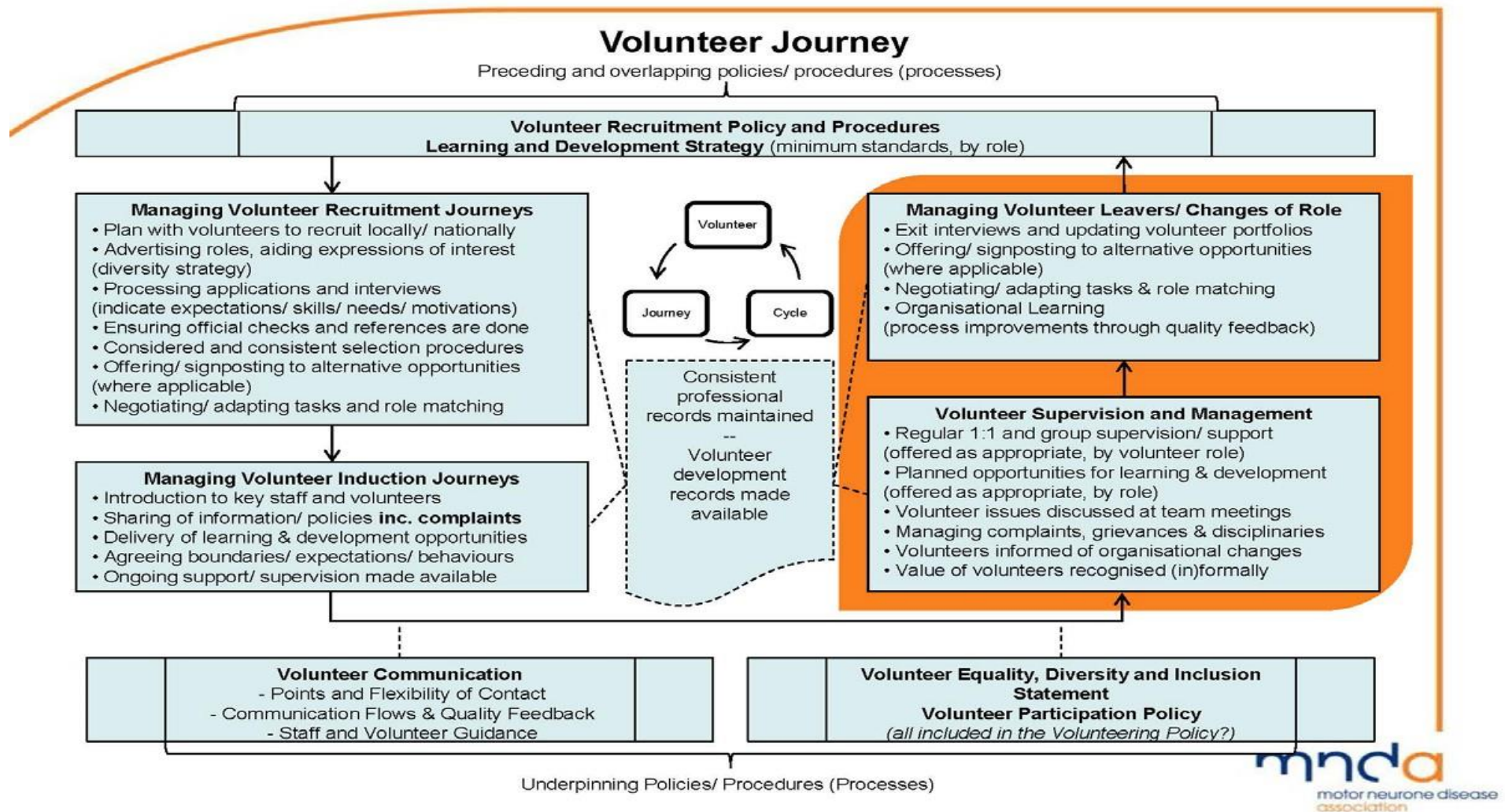
This policy specifies the principles and parameters of effective volunteer support, supervision, and review that must be adhered to. It acknowledges the role of staff and lead volunteers in support and supervision activities.

Where there are serious or persistent concerns about a volunteer, the procedure for Managing Concerns about a Volunteer policy should be referred to.

2. Our commitment to volunteers

The principals of volunteering outline our commitment to volunteers. We identify that every volunteer undertakes a journey with us and it is our responsibility to ensure volunteers are enabled and equipped to access effective and appropriate support.

The volunteer journey below identifies the stage at which this policy comes into effect.



3. Legislation

Supporting staff members (SSM) will store and manage support and supervision records with contribution from lead volunteers, as appropriate.

All support, supervision and review notes will be stored electronically in restricted access folders on the MINT system. Support and supervision records are confidential and will be stored in accordance with Data Protection.

4. Definitions

4.1 Support

Support can be flexible, and is provided by a range of people on a formal and ad hoc basis. In many cases, it is acknowledged that lead volunteers will provide day to day support such as Association Visitor Co-ordinators, experienced Association Visitors, and identified volunteers within branches and groups.

The main purpose of support is to:

- Provide a safe environment where some of the feelings generated by the work they do can be 'offloaded'
- Actively listen and discuss the impact of volunteering work on the individual
- Motivate and give the volunteer a sense that they are valued

Most support activity will be informal and recording may not be necessary or appropriate. However if issues of concern or significant support needs require action, the SSM must record these actions on the 'Support Needs' template.

For example, if a training need is identified, this should be noted on the volunteer's learning needs section and, if appropriate, a request for learning submitted.

4.2 Supervision (one-to-ones and branch and group development sessions)

Whilst lead volunteers may take on aspects of individual and group supervision, SSMs such as Volunteer Development Co-ordinators have overall accountability for maintaining supervision 'best practice'. Therefore, maintaining effective relationships between key staff and lead volunteers is vital.

Supervision is a means to:

- Enable two-way feedback and communication on organisational developments and volunteer experiences in carrying out their role(s)
- Inform and reinforce mutual expectations
- Assist individual and group development i.e. coordination of developing/ matching skills and aspirations to meeting Our Strategy and local needs
- Maintain a consistent and effective standard of service delivery
- Provide opportunities to discuss difficult or troubling areas of work, and signpost to alternative feedback routes such as the Complaints Procedure where necessary
- Acknowledge and value volunteer contributions and positive impact.
- Discuss personal issues, where these may have an impact on the volunteer's work.

Supervision should be:

- Overseen by someone with line management responsibility, and where staff are accountable to the Association for maintaining records and managing agreed actions
- Planned and structured
- Regular, and with agreed frequency
- Focused on roles and responsibilities
- Undertaken by a competent individuals
- Carried out with a view to develop and support others
- Be (if required) triggered and brought forward in response to significant risks or concerns of staff and volunteers.

The word supervision has negative connotations for some volunteers who may have had poor experiences in the past. We will refer to individual supervision sessions as 'one to ones' and group supervision sessions as 'branch and group development sessions'.

4.3 Annual Review

Again, whilst lead volunteers will be part of organising various annual meetings and events, SSM will have overall accountability for ensuring annual reviews happen consistently. Therefore, maintaining effective relationships between key staff and lead volunteers is vital.

The main purpose of an annual review is to:

- Reflect on the past year's achievements and challenges
- Identify what has been learnt and how the individual or branch / group has developed
- Plan for the year ahead – setting goals, learning objectives and identifying possible new activities to achieve these
- Link and report on individual or branch / group achievements and goals to organisational objectives and plans.

5. Supervision Standards

5.1 Frequency and format

The frequency and structure of supervision and support sessions will be dependent on a variety of factors, including:

- The nature of the role
- The quantity and nature of the work being undertaken
- Other support/supervision structures available
- The experience and competence of the volunteer.

In the early months of volunteering, or during periods of increased challenges, it might be appropriate to meet more frequently. Arrangements for additional supervision need to be flexible and open to changes of circumstance. They should reflect the nature and complexity of mutual commitments and the needs of the individual volunteer.

Please refer to our support framework documents which outline the expected and minimum levels of support and supervision provided by Association staff:

- [Association Visitor \(AV\) Support Framework](#)
- [Branch / Group Support Framework](#)
- Campaign Volunteers Support Framework - *currently under development*
- MND Connect Volunteers Support Framework - *currently under development*
- Fundraising Volunteers Support Framework - *currently under development*

5.2 Lead Volunteers and supervision – (where applicable)

Lead volunteers will not be seen as substitutes for providing support and supervision in place of the SSM, however they can be a vital support structures which will enable volunteers to achieve required standards, knowledge or confidence levels throughout their volunteering journey with the Association. SSMs will liaise closely with the lead volunteers in the management, support and development of all volunteers and be accountable for maintaining appropriate records.

5.3 Supervision competencies

Support, supervision and review are the responsibility of a competent SSM. Whilst they may engage volunteers to assist in the support of volunteers, for example through a team of mentors, they may not delegate the accountability.

When volunteers have more than 1 SSM, for example; where volunteers perform multiple roles they must receive appropriate supervision for each role.

If the SSM does not have the skills required to provide effective and appropriate support, supervision and review; it is the Associations responsibility to ensure that further development and training opportunities are provided.

5.4 Development

We recognise that volunteers give their time freely for a wide variety of reasons, where possible we will help volunteers maximise the realisation of these motivations through opportunities to learn and develop.

Supervision provides the perfect chance for this. Feedback on work done well can validate and motivate. Where difficulties exist, feedback provides an opportunity to identify what needs to change and put in place mechanisms to support learning and to help develop appropriate and required skills through learning.

People have different ways of learning and it is the responsibility of the SSM and the Association to try and match (where practicable) individual learning styles to different opportunities.

Our Volunteer Learning and Development Policy outlines further our commitment to continuous learning and development.

6. Support

The impact of MND on people's lives must never be under-estimated. Many of our volunteers have had experience of the disease first hand and continue to support individuals, families, carers and professionals directly and indirectly. These combined experiences are both physically and emotionally draining and need to be acknowledged in the support we offer volunteers as an Association. Additionally, there will be times when individuals require additional support e.g. where personal circumstances affect their capacity to fulfill an existing role(s). Here, peers, lead volunteers and the SSM will need to provide greater support than normal. It is important to consider the impact of stresses outside the volunteering environment and the subsequent impact on both the volunteer and those using our services. It may be necessary to consider a break from volunteering while these issues are addressed.

6.1 Criteria for effective support

Within the context of a voluntary sector, service-based organisation, effective and appropriate support:

- Allows flexibility and timeliness
- Is offered within clear agreements over confidentiality.

5.1.1. Flexibility

Whilst one-to-one and branch and group development sessions are set in advance and structured, support may need to be more fluid and ad hoc in order to respond to changes in area and volunteer needs and to allow emotive issues to be addressed promptly. In these circumstances, informal arrangements with the SSM should be made.

5.1.2. Confidentiality

People who provide support in a leadership, group or peer position need to manage issues of confidentiality with great care. It is not possible to give blanket promises of confidentiality in a support context, as there may be consequences to the service that take precedence. Always be clear about any limits there might be to confidentiality in the supervision and support context, which are likely to include the following:

- SSM may need to discuss things with their own managers
- Information will only be shared on a strictly 'need-to-know' basis
- Wherever possible, confidential issues will be discussed between the individual and the SSM prior to information being passed on
- Information will be stored securely in a locked cabinet or on a restricted access area on the MINT system.

Similarly, branch and group development sessions have guidance on what can and cannot be discussed outside of the group meeting. Further information about this can be found on our [Volunteer Zone](#)

7. Record Keeping

If suitable notes will be produced and retained for all volunteer support sessions, be it one-to-one or branch and group development sessions to:

- Promote consistency
- Plan effectively and agree priorities
- Monitor progress
- Evaluate challenges and measure impact of plans
- Provide an auditable trail, in case of later disputes

All records created must be kept securely; stored and shared in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

In order to develop internal consistency with record keeping we have developed the [‘Using Raisers Edge to Record and Obtain Information about Volunteers’](#) guide.

8. Mutual Expectations

Volunteers are an important and valued part of the Association.

By legal definition, volunteers will not be bound by contractual obligations. Thus whilst we may wish volunteers to carry out certain workloads or volunteer minimum numbers of hours we cannot legally oblige them to do so.

SSMs should be careful not to make volunteering arrangements contractual by insisting upon certain amounts or hours of volunteering.

There may be instances where inability or unwillingness to perform tasks or meet performance standards means that the volunteering opportunity needs to be removed, adapted, or other support mechanisms put in place in order to achieve Mutual Expectations.

9. Saying goodbye

Our aim is that, throughout a volunteers journey with the Association, they will have gained valuable knowledge and experience and feel they have invested their time and commitment well.

There are many reasons why volunteers may decide to leave; some may be the responsibility of the Association, whilst others are for individual reasons.

Association's responsibility

- Inadequate support or leadership
- Ineffective communication
- Lack of the proper tools to do the task
- Overload

Individual reasons

- Moving away
- Moving onto a new challenge or experience
- Their intention had never been to stay for a longer time
- Health reasons
- Unexpected family responsibilities

All volunteers will *(if appropriate) be given an opportunity to provide feedback based on their time as a volunteer. The Association will use the following approach to ensure all has been done to support volunteers through this progression:

- *Thank* – give the volunteer thanks and recognition for their contribution
- *Enable* – allow the volunteer to move on without a sense of guilt and without holding them back
- *Encourage* – if the volunteer have chosen to leave, support them in this
- *Assist* – provide references (when appropriate)
- *Assist* – provide personal development related information (when appropriate)
- *Explore* - find out the reasons for leaving
- *Explore* – does the volunteer wish to be involved in the Association in other ways?
- *Transfer* – if the volunteer is moving areas, do they wish to use their skills in the new area?
- *Open door* – ensure the volunteer knows they can return to the Association and volunteer in future (when appropriate)
- *Learn* – are there lessons for the future from the volunteer's decision to leave?
- *Ask* – are there any suggestions the volunteer can pass onto those in a similar role?

10. Glossary of terms

Lead Volunteers

A volunteer who has a formal or informal leadership role within the branch, group or region. This is the person the SSM or other volunteers will go to as a first port of call.

Line Management

Line managers are responsible for key functions in an organisation such as volunteer empowerment, training and development, motivation, team building, mentoring, etc. Line managers help people achieve the Vision of the Association.

One-to-One

Individual support given by the supporting staff member, this can be in a number of formats i.e. face to face, telephone.

Branch and group development session

A meeting to think about the current and future direction of the branch or group

Supporting Staff Member (SSM)

Member of paid staff who has accountability for providing support and supervision to volunteers

Support Needs Template

Areas of concern

i.e. workloads or personal circumstances

Key points	Actions	Date completed

Learning needs

i.e. bereavement counselling or active listening

Key points	Actions	Date completed