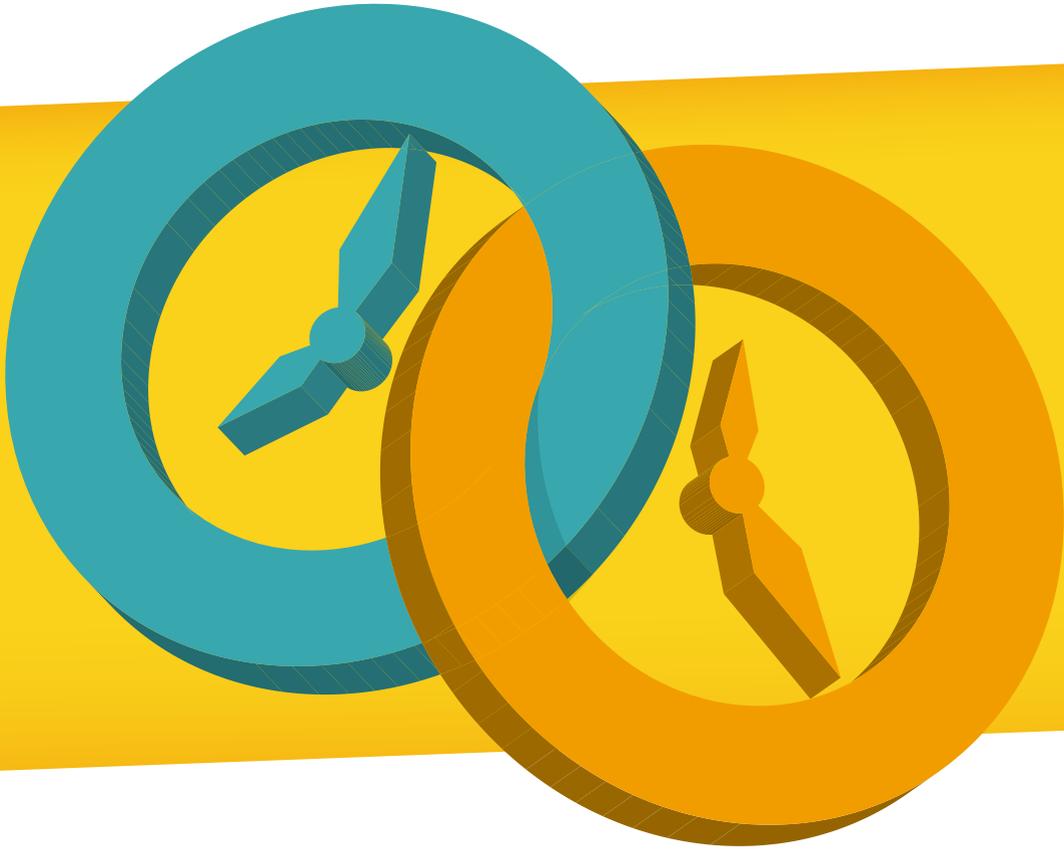


# Our Volunteers Handbook

## Spare a little time...





**‘I had no previous experience in volunteering but Connection Support have been immensely professional in easing me into the role gently and gradually.**

**- Richard, Volunteer**

# Hello & Welcome.

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## Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Connection Support and helping our clients across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes.

Volunteers are an essential part of how we deliver support to our clients, many of which have complex needs. You help vulnerable people who are in challenging stages of their lives. Giving your time and expertise means you are changing lives for the better.

We aim for everyone who gives us their time to feel valued and have the opportunity to develop skills and experience. Whatever you can do, it is appreciated by the clients you help either directly or indirectly.

This handbook has been given to you to explain all the key things you need to know about volunteering with us. We hope you find it a useful guide and will refer back to it. Your Volunteer Co-ordinator is on hand to answer any queries in more detail.

Thanks again for giving your time and sharing your skills with us.

You make a difference!

**Mark Thompson**  
CEO

## **A Little Bit About Us**

Connection Support provides a breadth of specialist support services to a range of people facing complex life challenges. Our specialist support is tailored around the person and makes a difference to their life now but also provides building blocks to help them help themselves in the future.

We provide flexible and tailored support and advice to a range of adults (young and old) and families in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. The support covers housing issues, homelessness, isolation, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse. Often clients have multiple issues which means our work with them is all encompassing.

## **About You**

We have teams of dedicated volunteers in various locations across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Volunteers join us for variety of reasons. Some people want to make a difference to people in their local community, others have specialist skills that they want to share with people in need and some are looking to develop new skills. There's no 'one size fits all' when it comes to volunteering with us. What all of the volunteers have in common is that they are vital to our service and clients.

## **Ways to get involved**

There are a number of ways for you to get involved.

Here are just a few of opportunities we have available across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire;

## **Help socially isolated people in your local community as a Befriender**

You will be able to support people to help them prevent or reduce social isolation and build up an appropriate social network. Befriending is a means of reducing the social isolation that so often leads to acrimonies in the experience of people of all ages.

## **Join our Admin Team**

Put your skills to good use or learn new ones whilst volunteering in one of our offices.

## **Support clients with Hoarding Disorder**

By building up a trustworthy relationship, you can help empower people to address their hoarding behaviour and to improve their living safely and comfortability in their own home.

## **Help us with transport**

You can help clients to get to their GP appointments, their assessments or simply help them with shopping. If you have an access to a bigger vehicle, help us transport and deliver furniture and white goods for Connection's clients who are in desperate need.

## **Help Parents in Buckinghamshire.**

You can mentor and support parents to enable them to do the best for their children. You will work with the whole family to bring about changes, to improve parenting skills and use resources in the community to improve family life for all.



'I feel part of the team at Connection Support because of the friendly staff.'

- Sam, Volunteer

# What You Can Expect From Us

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**We want to make sure that you enjoy your role and get the most out of it.**

## **Our commitment to our volunteers; we will:**

- Value you as a member of our team and treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation
- Make sure you understand what is expected of you and will give you a clear description of what your duties are and how they are to be carried out
- Let you know who is supervising your role
- Organise an induction and provide ongoing training and support
- Respect your privacy and confidentiality and you will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability
- Give you the tools to work safely
- Value you as a member of our team
- Provide you with liability insurance
- Consult you on any changes that may affect your volunteering
- Reimburse you for reasonable out of pocket expenses where financially possible and in agreement with your supervisor
- Follow a proper complaints procedure.

## Induction and Training

Your local volunteer co-ordinator will introduce you to the relevant Support Workers and others who you might be involved with. You will also receive an induction session in which you will be asked to review Connection Support policies and procedures.

As part of this process, you will have an opportunity to complete some e-learning on relevant topics that will enable you to understand and feel more confident about your role. Additional training opportunities may become available during your volunteering with Connection Support which you will be invited to.

## Support

You will receive on-going support from your Volunteer Co-ordinator who will be your first point of contact. Once a specific task has been identified (matching volunteer skills and client requirements) the Support Worker will explain how you can help to support the particular client. Alternative appropriate supervision arrangements will be agreed at the start of your role which may include direct supervision with one of our Area Team Volunteer Supervisors. This can be a review by phone or in person to focus on how your role is going and what other support or training you might need. This should be an opportunity for volunteers to raise any concerns and to talk

constructively about particular roles.

## The Essentials

As a volunteer, you'll need to understand and adhere to the policies and procedures at Connection Support. Please make sure you take a few minutes to have a good read through and familiarise yourself with them. Should you require additional information, please feel free to contact a Volunteer Co-ordinator:

### Email:

[volunteers@connectionsupport.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@connectionsupport.org.uk)

### Tel:

01865 711267 for Oxfordshire and  
01296 484322 for Buckinghamshire



'The team have welcomed me and made me feel like a member of staff. My induction was useful and they are patient with my questions!'

- Admin Volunteer



**‘Visiting people for a chat or help them with the crossword is so fulfilling. It may be the only person they see that day.’**

**- Befriender Volunteer**

## Expenses and Gifts

At Connection Support, we believe that you should not be out of pocket while on volunteering duty. Therefore we will reimburse you for any reasonable amount that you have spent as a result of your volunteering, up to agreed maximum level. This could include your mileage, public transport fares, parking tickets and other incidentals agreed in advance. Tickets and receipts must be provided in order to reclaim this money alongside a form which will need to be authorised by the Volunteer Co-ordinator. It remains the decision of the volunteers as to whether they want to claim expenses or donate back to Connection Support.

Giving or receiving gifts, whether from a member of staff or a client, may give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations of the level of support you can provide in your role. For further details, please refer to our code of conduct policy.

## Health and Safety

Connection Support is committed to looking after the health, safety and well-being of everyone who works for us, on our premises and those of our clients. As a volunteer, you will be covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as Connection Support employees.

We expect you to abide by the measures put in place by the risk assessment carried out to protect volunteers and clients.

## Personal safety and ID cards

Volunteers are required to provide an emergency contact name who we will contact in the unlikely event of emergency. Connection Support ID cards will be issued for relevant roles to identify you as part of our volunteer team.

## Confidentiality

Due to the vulnerability of our clients volunteers must maintain and respect confidentiality at all times unless sharing of information is required by law. All volunteers will be issued with a copy of Connection Support's confidentiality policy and be guided as to how this affects the work they will be doing. Volunteers who, due to the nature of their work, have access to data will be asked to sign a copy of the confidentiality policy.

## Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

If your volunteer role involves working directly with vulnerable adults, you will be required to undergo a DBS check as part of our policy on safeguarding. Full information on how to apply and the cost will be covered by Connection Support.

If you will be working with children you will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check.

## Equality and Diversity

Connection Support is actively committed to encouraging and promoting the richness brought to the organisation by the diversity of our staff, volunteers and clients.

Connection Support will ensure that this is reflected in all its practices, policies and services. We accept volunteers based on their suitability for their role.

We won't discriminate against any volunteers due to their age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

## No smoking policy

Smoking is not permitted at any of our offices or when staff and volunteers are involved with Connection Support activities.

## Insurance

Connection Support has Employer's Liability Insurance, this provides insurance against liability for injury and disease experienced by volunteers or staff as a direct result of their involvement with Connection Support activities.

As a registered volunteer you are also covered by our public liability insurance when carrying out your volunteer duties on our behalf. It does not cover pure accidents (e.g. if a spectator at an event

trips over their own feet, or malicious damage e.g. deliberate damage to equipment).

## Car Insurance

If you're involved in an activity for Connection Support that involves using your car, you must inform your own insurers. Most insurance companies agree to cover such car journeys at no extra charge – check this with your own insurance company. Your car will not be covered by the insurance described above.

## Data Protection

We have various processes, procedures and policies to comply with the GDPR. Your Volunteer Co-ordinator will provide our privacy notice.

This details what data of yours we collect; how we collect it; why we process it; who we share it with; what happens if you do not provide us with your data; protecting your data and how long we keep it for and your rights under GDPR. Volunteers complete training on GDPR with regards to your responsibilities to our clients. We will provide you with a Connection Support email address which must be used on every occasion when volunteering with us and carrying out your role as a volunteer. The GDPR has forced us to ban the use of personal email addresses being used and on no occasion must client's data of any kind be stored on your personal computer/phone etc. It is vital that no

portable devices are used to store data at any time, such as USB sticks which can easily be lost or misused. Any documentation / paperwork that you may have, containing personal data, must always be locked away securely when you are not directly using it. When carrying any documentation or paperwork you must at all times consider the security and privacy of these documents, it must be of your paramount concern.

The consequences of not following the GDPR regulations are very severe in terms of fines and loss of reputation for our service provision so please follow the above instructions. If you have any questions on GDPR please direct them in the first instance to your Volunteer Co-ordinator.

## Dealing with difficulties

### Issues within your role

If you experience a difficulty with any aspect of your role, please talk to your Volunteer Co-ordinator as soon as possible for advice and support.

If your role isn't working out quite as you hoped, please let your Connection Support Volunteer Co-ordinator know. Together you should try to work out any difficulties. If it is agreed it can't work, this shouldn't be seen as a failure. Perhaps there is a more suitable role for you.

#### Email:

[volunteers@connectionsupport.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@connectionsupport.org.uk)

#### Tel:

01865 711267 for Oxfordshire and  
01296 484322 for Buckinghamshire

**'I find it so fulfilling helping Syrian refugees settle in this country.'**

**- Volunteer,  
SVPRS Project**



# Nobody can do everything but everyone can do something!

**Connection Support** helps a wide range of people to change their lives, in small ways and big ways, so that people who are facing significant challenges can live as independently as possible.



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