

Sutton Mencap

Volunteer's Handbook



Introduction

The Mission Statement of Sutton Mencap is simply “To improve the lives of people with a learning disability and their carers”.

This is a really worthy aim, with great benefits to both recipients and ‘givers’, and we have many ‘givers’ (ie volunteers) who give their time and energies to adding something special to the lives of those who are disadvantaged because of their learning disability. As a parent/carer I thank God for the services of Sutton Mencap who over the years have given much pleasure to my son, contributed considerably to his wellbeing and development, and also provided much needed ‘relief’ /respite to us as parents. Volunteers have played an important part in all this – indeed make possible the variety and frequency of the many services provided by Sutton Mencap. Thank You and Well Done to all our volunteers. Stay with us - you make a difference!

David Bentley



Why be a volunteer?

The value of being a volunteer is that it offers people the opportunity to be helpful and gain experience and confidence in the skills necessary for the work, but within the time they are able to offer.

Clare Fionda
Trustee

About Sutton Mencap

Sutton Mencap is a long established charity (we celebrated our Golden Jubilee in 2006) providing services to people with a learning disability in the London Borough of Sutton. We have a small core team of permanent staff who work alongside a large team of sessional staff who deliver the day to day activities.

Our children's service provides after school clubs and clubs on Saturdays, which give children an opportunity to have fun in a safe and dynamic environment. We also run activities during the school holidays. These activities offer important respite care to the parents and carers of children with learning disabilities, and play and social opportunities to the children.



Adult services have expanded over the last few years and are now an established part of the activities that we deliver. Adult services run a range of leisure and respite sessions, ranging from cookery classes, sports activities, youth groups and computer classes. Many of the sessions are run from our premises at 8 Stanley Park Road, but wherever possible, we run sessions in the local community. We also have

the opportunity to take groups of service users away for the weekend. This provides important respite, not only for the service users, but for parents and carers. It also allows those attending the weekend breaks to have fun with their friends and learn new skills and share new experiences.



The Active London Project

The Active London Project is funded by Sport England and aims to help more people with a learning disability to access sport in the community. We run various sports activities specifically for people with a learning disability from dancing to soccer and our buddy scheme helps individuals and small groups to gain more independence by attending a wide range of activities in the community.



Where possible mainstream activities are accessed which helps to break down barriers and enable members to take a more active role in the community.



If you enjoy sport and would like to find out more about how you can get involved in the project please speak to Tracey.



**SPORT
ENGLAND**

Why we involve volunteers

A volunteer is someone who gives time and effort freely to the organisation through personal choice. Sutton Mencap believes that volunteers offer a wide range of life experiences, backgrounds and skills which many not be available within the paid staff team. Volunteers also allow extra support to services and help Sutton Mencap to cope with the changes in workload which naturally take place in such an organisation. Sutton Mencap also believes that the knowledge that some people are working with them without receiving a financial reward has a great benefit to the self esteem and enjoyment of the service users.

Sutton Mencap believes the organisation is improved by including volunteers, over and above the additional support they are able to offer staff in providing services. We do not believe that volunteers should be used as a source of cheap labour, nor that they should replace skilled, paid staff.



The views of the staff team

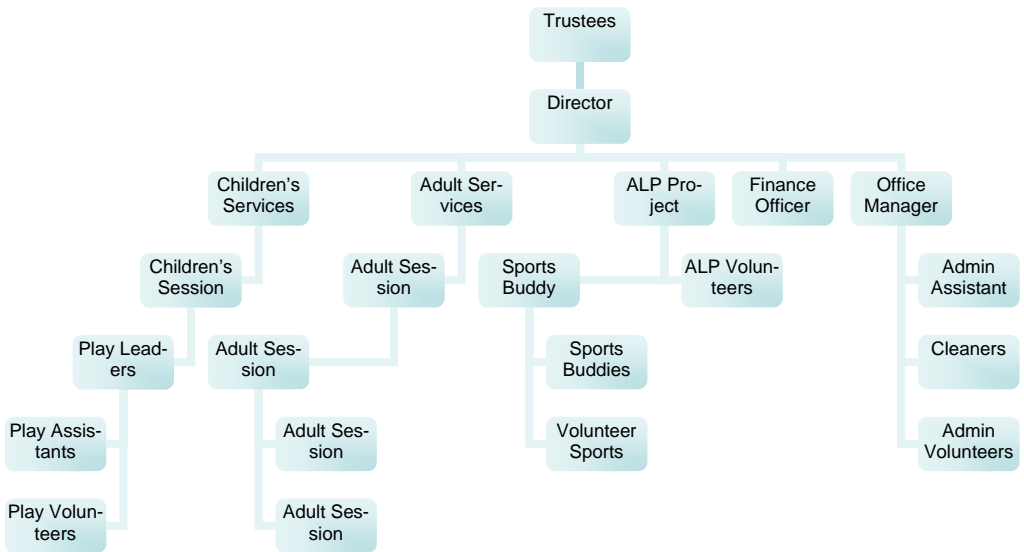
Volunteers offer extra value to the services we deliver; they allow us to offer a higher level of support than would otherwise be available. Volunteers also offer a greater range of skills, experience and backgrounds than we traditionally get when recruiting paid staff. (Jan, Director)

Volunteers are there because they want and choose to be part of a team and want to give something back to society, therefore can be reliable, trustworthy, bring fresh ideas and set good examples to those on the service, to know that not everything is about money. (Olivia, Adult Services Manager)

Using volunteers enables our children to have some one to one support which helps them develop their play skills and enables them to participate more fully. (Sue, Children's Services Manager)

The Structure of Sutton Mencap

Sutton Mencap is a charity company. This means that it is run by a board of Trustees, who decide on the long term strategy and direction of the charity. The Director then makes the decisions happen, and manages the day to day running of the charity. All of our Trustees are volunteers, and many of them are carers themselves.



Our current Board of Trustees is; Our current Core Staff are;

Mavis Peart (Chairman)
Clare Fionda (Vice Chairman)
John Vaughan (Treasurer)
Sandra Cruickshank
Derrick Copeman
David Schad
David Bentley
Christina Mann
Chris Halsey

Jan Galloway (Director)
Sue Muckle (Children's Services Manager)
Olivia Griffin (Adult Services Manager)
Tracey Hickey (ALP Project Worker)
Kelly Banton (Sports Buddy Coordinator)
Pankaj Patel (Finance Officer)
Emma O'Connell (Office Manager)
Rosemary Frost (Admin Assistant)



Joining Sutton Mencap as a Volunteer

You don't have to have any experience or qualifications to volunteer with us, just a bit of empathy for people with a learning disability, and of course some free time. Lots of people use volunteering as a way back into work after a break, or as a change from their paid employment, or just because they want to make a contribution. You can either volunteer to work on our services, or as part of our administration. We try to recruit volunteers from a wide a spectrum of the community as possible, just like our service users.



Volunteers start with a short introductory visit, to get an idea of what Sutton Mencap does and where they might fit in. We then need two references to take you on as a volunteer – either work references or character references. Don't worry if you've been out of the workplace for a while – we can usually work something out.

We then ask that you undergo a CRB check - all of our staff, volunteers and Trustees have to have one, because the people we work with are so vulnerable. This doesn't mean that we think you're volunteering for the wrong reasons! If you are concerned about the process at all, please contact your line manager or one of the core staff, in confidence.

When you first join us as a volunteer, you'll have a short induction session with your line manager. This is just a quick introduction to what you will be doing and a few important things you need to know. If you claim benefits, this is the time to let the benefit office know you're volunteering.



You'll then be on a three month "probationary period". This is to make sure that you're a good fit for us, and that we're a good fit for you. During this time, you will have regular (but short!) updates with your line manager and you will be given some more policies and procedures to familiarize yourself with.



At the end of the period, you'll have another short session with your line manager, and assuming everyone's happy, you'll be added to the list of regular volunteers. You and your line manager will then have a meeting once every three months to check that you are happy in your role and that you want to continue volunteering. If at any point you're interested in changing volunteer roles, do bring it up with your line manager – we want you to have a wide range of experience.

Training Opportunities



We're very keen to develop our volunteer's skills and abilities. Training courses are publicized in the Staff/Volunteers newsletter and on the notice board. If you see a course you might be interested in, just let us know. Although we have limited training budget we will consider anything, as long as it's related to your volunteering role. SCOLA in particular offer a wide range of very reasonably priced courses.

Sutton Mencap staff have a mandatory training programme and you are encouraged to participate in this if you are interested in doing so. Please ask your line manager about training.



Insurance



Volunteers are covered by our Employer's Liability Insurance. If you would like to see a copy of the policy please call at the office. You are covered by insurance as long as you follow the guidelines laid out in the volunteer policy. If you are ever concerned about being insured, please discuss it with your line manager.

Policies and Procedures

A full copy of our policies and procedures is available at the main office. Please take the time to read through the policies and procedures when you can - some of them will be given to you during your probationary period.

This booklet contains the Volunteer Policy and Expenses policy. Sorry if they seem a bit daunting! You will need to read through these before you start volunteering regularly with Sutton Mencap. If you need help with anything in the policies, please don't hesitate to ask your line manager, Office Manager, or Director.

Some volunteers don't like to take money for out of pocket expenses, but it's very important to us that you don't lose out by volunteering for us, and we have a budget for volunteer expenses. So if the policy says you're entitled to claim for something, please claim.

We welcome volunteers who are on benefits – please remember to inform the benefits office that you are volunteering.



Feedback – making your views about Sutton Mencap

The first and most obvious way to make your views known is to tell your colleagues, especially your line manager. We have a staff/volunteers newsletter and we welcome submissions from volunteers about their experiences of Sutton Mencap – email them to info@suttonmencap.org.uk, leave in the Newsletter pigeonhole in the main office, or give it to your line manager. If you prefer to remain anonymous, there is a drop box in the lobby of Number 8 for suggestions. Suggestions can also be sent by email to info@suttonmencap.org.uk, where they will be read by the office manager first and then passed on to the appropriate staff member. In addition, you can come and see the core staff team in the office during normal business hours – if you want to see a particular person it's usually best to make an appointment!

As a volunteer you are not required to attend staff meetings, but we encourage you to do so and make your views known.



Offloading – if it all gets too much

Working with people with a learning disability is challenging and rewarding, but it gets too much for the best of us sometimes. Don't be ashamed to ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed – your health and wellbeing are every bit as important as that of our service users and paid staff.



If it is all getting too much, ask your line manager for an appointment to talk things over. We can arrange for you to take a break from volunteering, or to move to a less challenging role for a while, or just give you the opportunity to let off some steam.

How you can be involved

Volunteering roles change all the time, to fit the needs of the service users and Sutton Mencap Here are a few of the activities you can be involved in. For more information on the various roles available, please contact Emma at the office.



After School Club

A safe and stimulating play environment, runs term time Mondays and Tuesdays.

Ages 5 - 14

3.15 - 5.45 pm at No 8

Holiday Play Scheme

Runs during most school holidays, with different days for different age groups.

Ages 5 - 14

10am - 3.00pm at No 8

Saturday Club

Inside and outside play activities, music and singing, and group craft and cookery sessions.

10 am - 3.30 pm at No 8

Our lively **Youth Group** meets at Number 8 twice a week to socialise, eat, have fun and enjoy new challenges.

Ages 15 - 19, 3.30 - 6.30pm

We also meet during the holidays and on some Saturdays.

Adult Services

Computer Club

Saturdays 10am to noon in term time - in association with St Philomena's School Wallington

Green Fingers

Allotment Group
Grow and plant vegetables, herbs, seeds etc.
Fridays 10am - noon
Wandle Road
Allotment Site

Cookery Group

In partnership with Wallington High School for Girls Engineering School
Tuesdays 3.30pm - 5pm in term time only.

Dance

Rock 'n' Roll and Salsa
Mondays 1.15 - 3.15 pm
Sutton Arena



Volunteering outside of activities

You can join Sutton Mencap's administrative team as a volunteer, and improve your office and computing skills whilst providing a valuable service to the organisation.

We always need help to maintain our allotment and the grounds around Number 8, so if you have some free time and know the difference between the weeds and the plants, let us know!

Sutton Mencap's commitment to it's volunteers, and the commitment we ask for from you



Sutton Mencap will;

- Provide you with the support necessary to carry out your role
- Provide a range of tasks (within the role description) which are interesting, fun and creative, as well as more mundane tasks
- Provide any equipment necessary to fulfil those tasks
- Work to develop with the skills you already have and help you acquire new ones
- Offer you plenty of emotional support with your volunteering role, and the opportunity to offload if you need it
- Reimburse you for your out of pocket expenses (please see our policy)
- Respect your privacy and safeguard your personal details
- Act at all times according to our Diversity Policy
- Work with you to make your volunteering experience as valuable as possible.
- Keep you informed of relevant developments within Sutton Mencap's work (generally through the Staff and Volunteer's newsletter).
- Offer you the opportunity to move to other activities if you don't like your first choice, or fancy a change

Sutton Mencap will not;

- Pay you!
- Ask you at any time to take sole responsibility for a service user
- Ask you to take part in the personal care of a service user
- Ask you to take the place of a paid member of staff

Expect you to do anything with which you, personally, are uncomfortable
Expect you to do all the dull and boring tasks without also getting to enjoy some of the fun ones.
Put your own money into activities
Move you from activity to activity without consulting you

Sutton Mencap asks you to;

Commit to volunteering with us for three months
Read and understand our policies and procedures, and stick to them
Make sure you are on time, and fulfil the hours to which you have committed (NB we are very flexible about scheduling hours, but once we've scheduled them, we need you to turn up!)
Communicate with us if you are unhappy about some aspect of your volunteering role
Make suggestions about how to make our volunteer program more enjoyable
Respect the privacy and safeguard the personal details
Act at all times according to our Diversity Policy
Let us know if you cannot attend your volunteering role for any reason



Leaving Sutton Mencap

If you decide you want to stop volunteering with us, please do let us know. We'd like the opportunity to ask you a few questions about your experience of volunteering with Sutton Mencap and how we could improve the experience for people in the future.

We're not going to be angry that you're leaving!

We recognise that sometimes, people just need a change of scene, in addition to all sorts of changes which make it difficult to continue volunteering.

Appendix - Policies and Procedures

SUTTON MENCAP

VOLUNTEER POLICY & PROCEDURE

This policy attempts to recognise the responsibility of Sutton Mencap to its volunteers and their role within the organisation

Definition of a volunteer

A volunteer is someone who gives time and effort freely to the organisation, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward outside of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.

Sutton Mencap believes that volunteers offer a wide range of life experiences, backgrounds and skills which many not be available within the paid staff team. Volunteers also allow extra support to services and help Sutton Mencap to cope with the changes in workload which naturally take place in such an organisation. Sutton Mencap also believes that the knowledge that some people are working with them without receiving a financial reward has a great benefit to the self esteem and enjoyment of the service users.

Sutton Mencap believes the organisation is improved by including volunteers, over and above the additional support they are able to offer staff in providing services. We are committed to making volunteering a worthwhile and enjoyable activity that benefits both individual and organisation.

Where volunteers can be included in the service

Volunteers are primarily involved in four areas of the organisation – adult services, children’s services, the admin. office, and as Trustees.

Each service will have a nominated line manager who will usually be the session coordinator. Admin volunteers will be line managed by the Office Manager. It is the role of the line manager to ensure that the volunteer is supported and supervised at all times, either by the manager themselves or by another paid member of staff. Sutton Mencap recognises that working with people with a learning disability can be challenging and emotionally draining, and volunteers should be offered the opportunity to offload if required.

All volunteers can refuse to participate in any activity that they consider unrealistic or which they consider they do not have the skills to carry out, and should be given the opportunity to discuss this or any other matter that worries them. Volunteers should familiarize themselves with the POVA and Protection of Children policies in the Volunteer Handbook.

Service Volunteers

Children's Services volunteers take part in the After School, Saturday and Holiday play services. A full description of the activities involved can be found in the volunteer task description.

Adults Services volunteers take part in the evening and weekend leisure sessions provided by Sutton Mencap for adults with a learning disability. A full description of the activities involved can be found in the volunteer task description.

The following rules apply to all services volunteers;

Volunteers should be under the supervision of paid staff at all times

Volunteers should never be left alone with a service users, or be asked to take sole responsibility for their safety and wellbeing

Volunteers should never be asked to participate in the personal care of a service user

Volunteers should be encouraged to take part in all aspects of service provision, including maintenance and cleaning of equipment, session planning and session briefing and debriefing

However, the most important activity for volunteers is interacting with the service users and assisting them to enjoy the activity.

Admin office volunteers

Admin office volunteers take part in the activities of the administration office at 8 Stanley Park Road during normal office hours. A full description of the activities involved can be found in the volunteer task description.

The following rules apply to admin office volunteers;

Volunteers should never be left alone in the building

Volunteers will not be responsible for opening the building in the morning or for closing the building in the evening. Although volunteers may, from time to time, be lent a set of keys for a specific activity, volunteers should not normally be keyholders.

Volunteers will not be asked to handle money, unless

Collecting ticket money for specific events

Collecting membership fees

Buying office and building supplies (ie milk, stamps)

Collecting payment from external groups for refreshments

The access of volunteers to confidential information will be restricted where possible, and volunteers will be expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Policy at all times. The Confidentiality Policy is held in the main office.

Probationary period

All volunteers joining Sutton Mencap are first engaged on a three month probationary period. The purpose of this period is to ensure that the volunteer is a good fit for the role in question and vice versa. During this period the line manager should assess the volunteer's interaction with the staff and service users, identify any training needs, and make a decision on whether the volunteer should continue in the role. The volunteer should also be encouraged to assess his/her suitability for the position. Volunteers unsuited to one position should be encouraged to try others, (for example service volunteers should be encouraged to try working in the admin office if the role of a service volunteer is unsuitable). At the end of the probationary period, the volunteer, line manager and relevant Service or Office manager should meet to make a decision about whether the volunteer should continue to volunteer. The assessment should include an overview of the volunteer's interaction with the staff and service users, their reliability, commitment and enjoyment of the role, and any training needs should also be discussed. The decision of the Service and Office Manager is final.

Once through the probationary period, reviews of the volunteer's role should be held every three months, once more to establish if the volunteer and the role in question are a good fit for each other. Volunteers should be encouraged to experience other activities and volunteering roles if they express an interest.

CRB checks

The recruitment and continuation within the service of all volunteers is subject to a CRB check. See the separate Volunteer Recruitment Policy.

Time commitment and leave

All reasonable efforts should be made to accommodate volunteer's changes of schedule and outside commitments (for example, some parents may only be able to volunteer during school term time). However, it is expected that where possible they will commit to a regular pattern of volunteering, and inform their line manager if they will not be able to attend a pre-arranged session. Volunteers are welcome to take a break from volunteering and return to it at any time, provided their line manager is informed in advance. Sutton Mencap cannot guarantee to hold any volunteering position open for more than one month and volunteers absent for longer than this time may be asked to undergo induction and the probationary period again. Repeated absences (particularly if unannounced) could cause the volunteering role to be offered to someone else and the absent volunteer being removed from the volunteer list. For further details please refer to the Discipline and Grievance policy in the Volunteer's Handbook.

Attendance at Staff Meetings

Volunteers are encouraged to join staff briefing and debriefing sessions, and to make a contribution at both. Staff meetings, which are held termly, are also open to volunteers and they are encouraged to attend. It is particularly important that volunteers use these opportunities to bring up any concerns they may have about individual service users, as service users sometimes feel more able to discuss problems with volunteers than with staff.

Training

Sutton Mencap provides a mandatory training programme to all staff, and volunteers are encouraged to participate in this programme to whatever extent they feel able. Training opportunities are advertised in the staff/volunteers newsletter and on the notice board. If volunteers become aware of other training opportunities (for example SCOLA courses) which are related to their volunteering activity, they should discuss these with their line manager. Sutton Mencap is committed to training for both staff and volunteers and volunteers should

be encouraged to participate in any available training relevant to their volunteering role.

Expenses

Please refer to the expenses policy in the volunteer's handbook.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Sutton Mencap's Insurance Policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in work on our behalf. If volunteers have any concerns about whether a particular activity is covered they should refer to their line manager.

Health & Safety

Volunteers are included in Sutton Mencap's Health & Safety Policy, a copy of which is included in the Volunteers' Handbook. All volunteers are expected to be familiar with the policy and to be aware of the Health and Safety issues of their activity at all times. If volunteers have any concerns about whether a particular activity is covered they should refer to their line manager.

Volunteers should take adequate precautions to avoid infection, eg by protecting open cuts with plasters and ensuring that all inoculations are up to date. More information is available from the line manager and the volunteer's GPs.

Departure of Volunteers

When a volunteer leaves Sutton Mencap, either the Children's or Adult Services Manager will arrange for a review to be carried out of the volunteer's placement, using the standard exit interview questions. The purpose of the exit interview is to improve the volunteering experience for future volunteers. For volunteers pursuing paid employment or further education, the line manager will provide references if appropriate. References should be cleared by either the Children's or Adult Services Manager before being sent to the prospective employer/educator.

Sutton Mencap Volunteer Expenses Policy

Introduction

Sutton Mencap recognises the enormous contribution made to the organisation by unpaid volunteers, in service provision, administration, and as our Trustees.

We recognise that some volunteers feel uncomfortable accepting expenses as they feel that they are offering their services for free. However, it is very important to Sutton Mencap that volunteers feel valued and do not lose out financially by giving their time to support our activities.

We therefore strongly encourage volunteers to claim expenses, as outlined below.

Travel

All volunteers can claim the following travel expenses to and from Sutton Mencap's activities;

public transport fares – volunteers are expected to travel by the most direct route possible, accepting that some volunteers will not be able to take the most direct route due to physical restrictions.

parking charges – if the staff/volunteers carpark at Number 8 Stanley Park Road is full, or if the activity volunteered for takes place off site, volunteers using their cars can claim parking charges up to £5. Volunteers who use their cars to travel to Sutton Mencap can claim mileage at a rate of 40p per mile.

Food

Any volunteer working more than five hours in one day may claim food expenses, up to £5 per meal. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided free at most activities, and if food is provided as part of the activity (for example, the meal provided by Youth Group), volunteers are encouraged to eat this rather than bringing in food from outside.

Expenses incurred in the course of activities

If the volunteered for activity carries an expense (for example, a cinema ticket), the group coordinator will arrange to pay for the volun-

teer's share. This includes travel expenses incurred during the activity (for example, taking the bus from Number 8 Stanley Park Road to the cinema). If the volunteer is asked to bring some item or material to the activity (for example, milk), the volunteer should obtain a receipt and include it in their expenses claim. Volunteers are asked not to buy items or materials without first being asked to by a member of staff.

One off expenses

If some expense is incurred during the volunteered for activity not covered above, please contact the main office to discuss this.

Procedure

All expense claims must be accompanied by a claim form (available from the office or in the volunteer's handbook) and the relevant receipts. Sutton Mencap cannot reimburse expenses without a receipt, with the exception of mileage expenses for volunteers travelling by car. All expenses claims should be submitted within one month of the volunteered for activity. Older expenses claims may not be processed, at the discretion of the Finance Officer.

Volunteers should either hand their claim form and receipts in at the office, or to the coordinator of the volunteered for activity.

If handed in at the office, the claim will be settled within one week.

If handed to the group coordinator, where possible the claim should be settled immediately from the group float, otherwise it should be settled at the next volunteered for activity.

All settlements should be made in cash unless requested otherwise by the volunteer.

Expenses claims should be checked by either the Office Manager or the Finance Officer before payment. In particular, it is important that the correct receipts are included.

