

Volunteer policy

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa) is a national charity providing information, advice and support to children growing up in families where one or both parents suffer from alcoholism or a similar addictive problem. This includes children of alcohol dependent parents of all ages, many of whose problems only become apparent in adulthood. Nacoa also provides information and advice to professionals who deal with children of alcohol dependent parents in their everyday work, raises the profile of children of alcohol dependent parents in the public consciousness and promotes research into the particular problems faced by those who grow up with parental alcoholism and the prevention of alcoholism developing in this vulnerable group of children.

Volunteers bring an essential and valued contribution to the work of Nacoa. Their involvement helps the organisation to maintain and develop the range of services and support which have been growing since its foundation in 1990.

- Volunteering is a valuable and integral part of Nacoa, and all volunteers deserve support and recognition.
- Volunteering is a matter of free choice and there can be no compulsion to become a volunteer; volunteers are free to opt out at any time.
- Everyone has the right to volunteer without experiencing discrimination.
- Involving volunteers complements rather than substitutes the work of paid staff.

Policy Aim

- To actively support and promote volunteering within Nacoa.
- To promote best practice throughout the organisation by providing a framework which sets out volunteers' and Nacoa's expectations and responsibilities.
- To ensure a consistent approach to the management and support of volunteers.
- To ensure the application of equal opportunities in relation to volunteering.

Recruitment / Selection

- The selection process for volunteers avoids unfair discrimination and welcomes all prospective volunteers, as detailed in Nacoa's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Volunteers are recruited in a number of ways:
 - through local organisations which place volunteers with charities
 - through the Nacoa website, and other organisations' websites aimed at volunteering
 - through press articles
 - through Nacoa News and the Annual Report
- Potential volunteers will be asked to:
 - fill out an application form
 - provide details of two referees, not relatives, who will comment on the candidate's previous work



- Potential volunteers may also be asked to attend an informal interview. When a volunteer has been referred by, or placed through, another agency, the above practices will still apply.
- If the opportunity of volunteering in a particular role is not right for a potential volunteer, or he/she is considered inappropriate, Nacoa will attempt to aid them in finding alternative voluntary work, either within Nacoa, or with another organisation.
A police check will be undertaken for all volunteers.

Volunteer Roles

- The Nacoa helpline is staffed entirely by volunteer helpline counsellors who have undergone foundation training and induction. They undertake the following duties:
 - to commit to a regular, preferably weekly, shift on the helpline
 - to commit to ongoing training, including speaker and Volunteer Monthly Meetings
 - to answer the helpline phone when on duty
 - to listen to callers, and provide support, advice and information as appropriate
 - to research the specific requests or needs of callers
 - to send out information packs to all callers who request them
 - to reply to helpline e-mails
- Helpline researchers who have undergone foundation training and induction undertake Nacoa helpline research. They undertake the following duties:
 - to provide support, advice and information as appropriate
 - to research the specific requests or needs of callers
 - to send out information packs to all callers who request them
- There are a number of other volunteering roles at Nacoa which do not involve helpline work:
 - Nacoa UK Resource Database:
 - researching other organisations which may be of interest to Nacoa
 - helping to update the Nacoa UK Resource Database and resources files
 - maintaining the Nacoa library and keeping it up-to-date
 - Information sharing:
 - distributing information, posters and leaflets to GP's surgeries, local libraries, schools and other services to whom Nacoa may be useful.
 - Nacoa News volunteers:
 - writing articles for or otherwise contributing to, the quarterly newsletter "Nacoa News"
 - helping to produce the newsletter
 - Website volunteers:
 - helping to update the Nacoa website
 - consulting on site design
 - Sharing experience:
 - contributing anonymously to the Nacoa personal experiences webpage
 - Media/research volunteers:
 - media volunteers speak to the media and press from personal, professional or volunteering experience
 - research volunteers share this experience, usually anonymously, as research



- participants
- Speaker volunteers:
 - deliver talks and presentations to organisations providing information about Nacoa's services for children of alcohol dependent parents developing presentation materials, particularly for schools
 - National and local press-article clipping:
 - writing articles for the press and media about Nacoa and related issues
 - helping Nacoa to keep abreast of information that has been published in the local and national press, and compiling this information for Nacoa's resources
 - Fundraisers:
 - organising and taking part in fundraising activities
 - co-ordinating local fundraising groups
- Volunteers are never restricted solely to the tasks outlined in their job description, and may change their role at any time. Nacoa is open to ideas from volunteers on how to develop different roles, and aims to work together with volunteers to create the best possible volunteering environment.

Training / Induction

- All volunteers receive training and induction suitable to their role.
- All helpline counsellors and helpline researchers are required to complete the foundation training programme and induction. Training is made available to all other volunteers where possible.
- The foundation training programme consists of:
 - Information on addiction, alcoholism, co-dependency, the family system and abuse
 - Training in listening skills and self-awareness.
 - An induction in helpline policies, procedures, and resources.
- Speaker meetings take place throughout the year for all volunteers. These aim to introduce volunteers to other organisations that work closely with Nacoa. Volunteers' Monthly Meetings are provided for helpline counsellors and provide the opportunity to explore specific issues and areas of interest in more depth.

Supervision and support

- The Volunteer Co-ordinator, who will provide support and advice, supervises volunteers. In the absence of the Volunteer Co-ordinator, another helpline supervisor will be available in person. The Nacoa support network also ensures that support and advice is accessible to volunteers out of office hours if necessary.
- Student volunteers from the University of Bristol receive additional support from the SCA Co-ordinators, who are responsible for representing students' views at both Nacoa and Student Community Action.
- Volunteers' Monthly Meetings take place, facilitated by helpline counsellors. These aim to provide helpline counsellors with ongoing support, and to allow them to raise concerns, which are then discussed and addressed by the Nacoa helpline counselling team. These meetings are also used to discuss new developments within the organisation with helpline counsellors, and to hear their views.
- The Volunteer Co-ordinator will always ensure that one-to-one support is available to volunteers who wish to raise individual issues that may not be appropriate in a group setting.



- Nacoa recognises volunteers as equal partners in achieving the aims of the organisation, and ensures that their contribution is an integral part of the service. It is committed to promoting the value and contribution of volunteers, and aims to ensure that volunteering with Nacoa is a positive experience.

Expectations of Volunteers

- To be respected and valued and to know what they can expect, and what their responsibilities are.
- To be provided with the necessary information to carry out their volunteering role, and to know what is expected of them.
- To receive training and induction appropriate to their role.
- To receive support and supervision from Nacoa as an organisation, and from a named person within the service.
- To be provided with a safe working environment, and to be advised of Nacoa's Health and Safety Policy.
- To be covered by Nacoa's Insurance Policy.
- To be reimbursed for all out of pocket expenses whilst volunteering at Nacoa, and whilst travelling to and from the location of a volunteering activity.
- To be free from discrimination, as outlined in Nacoa's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- To have any grievance treated seriously and promptly, as detailed in Nacoa's Code of Practice.
- To be fairly treated in the case of disciplinary measures, according to the Disciplinary Policy.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- To carry out their agreed duties to the best of their abilities.
- To work within the aim, objectives and values of Nacoa.
- To attend training sessions and support groups where agreed.
- To work with agreed policies, codes of practice and guidelines, as explained during the induction process.
- To adhere to Nacoa's Confidentiality Policy, and respect the privacy of helpline callers.
- To be honest and reliable, and to inform Nacoa if unable to attend for volunteering duties.

Responsibilities of Nacoa

- To provide information, foundation training and induction to enable helpline counsellors and researchers to meet the responsibilities of their volunteer role.
- To provide foundation training to speaker volunteers.
- To provide ongoing support and supervision, as well as ongoing training sessions, to volunteers as agreed.
- To identify a named person who will maintain contact with the volunteer on a regular basis.
- To welcome any comments and ideas from volunteers regarding ways in which their role may be developed and improved.



- To protect the interests and safety of both helpline callers and volunteers. In the case that these are compromised or endangered, Nacoa may request that an individual stops volunteering.
- To treat volunteers as equal partners in achieving the aims of Nacoa.
- To ensure that volunteers' tasks are regularly monitored and evaluated, and to review its volunteering policy and procedures on an annual basis.

