



Older People Active Lives

Volunteer Handbook

February 2020



OPAL Services (Rural West Cheshire),

P.O. Box 161, Whitchurch, SY13 9BG

www.opalservices.org.uk

Charity no. 1143753 | Registered company no. 7521625.

Introduction

Welcome to our charity, OPAL Services (Rural West Cheshire), known in short as OPAL, which provides a range of services known as OPAL Services. Thank you for agreeing to be a volunteer with one of these OPAL (Older People Active Lives) Services.

We very much welcome your contribution and hope that this volunteer handbook will provide you with useful information about being a volunteer with us, as well as explaining what we do and how we operate.

This handbook is part of the support we offer all volunteers and contains important information about the policies and procedures that might affect you as a volunteer, but above all, we hope it helps you to get the most out of your volunteering.

What is Our Charity, and OPAL Services All About?

This is best summed up by our Mission Statement: -

Our Mission is to offer accessible, enjoyable and enabling activities for older people in rural West Cheshire, in order to reduce isolation and loneliness. We aim to benefit older people and their carers who may be housebound and / or socially isolated, and who find it difficult to be part of their community without the support of others.

Our strapline is important and very relevant

“ Think of me, not my age ”

We also have a series of core values that underpin what we do

We

- Believe that age is not a barrier to a full and interesting life
- Strive to be inclusive and supportive
- Believe in enhancing the lives of older people, offering innovative and imaginative programmes alongside tried and tested activities
- Provide individualised services which flex to meet specific needs
- Aim to be fair in what we do and to treat everyone equally;
- Aim to prevent or reduce the isolation of living alone in a rural setting
- Believe that carers must have breaks from their responsibilities for their own well-being. By enabling carers to have some relief and support we are helping to enable them to continue to provide care for longer, and to enhance their caring role
- Believe that the best way of delivering our local services is through dedicated local volunteers, led and supported by a small number of staff
- Will ensure that our current activities are in line with the choices of members
- Will develop new strands of work to meet members' choices and aspirations
- Believe that volunteering contributes to a person's own general health and wellbeing and
- Are rooted in local communities which give us an awareness of need and of existing opportunities and potential

Who Runs Our Charity?

We are run by a dedicated team of trustees, staff and volunteers. Currently (February 2020) we have a staff of 5 part-time Organisers, 2 part-time Administrators, a Volunteer Co-ordinator, around 220 volunteers and 10 Trustees.

The trustees hold a board meeting at least 4 times a year as well as an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

The names of Trustees are in our “Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements”, along with our accounts which are externally examined. Members of the public can request a copy of this report from us, as well as find a copy on our web site www.opalservices.org.uk.

OPAL is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered to work with older people living in the rural areas of West Cheshire. We are regulated by the Charity Commission and must comply with their rules and regulations, and the terms of our constitution/Articles of Association. We have both a registered charity number and a company number.

To enable OPAL to run, we receive funding from a range of sources, such as Cheshire West and Chester Council and The Westminster Foundation. In the past we have received funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation, The Big Lottery, as well as a number of local organisations and grant giving charities. During 2018 we were adopted by Rowlinsons Solicitors, based in Frodsham, as their Charity of the Year. Thanks to the generosity of local people, we undertake fundraising ourselves and we hope you will join in these activities as and when we run them during the year.

Our OPAL Services

Our main purpose is to offer services which are accessible, enjoyable and provide activities for older people in rural West Cheshire, in order to reduce isolation and loneliness. We aim to benefit older people and their carers who may be housebound and/or socially isolated, and who find it difficult to be part of their community without the support of others.

As at February 2020, we offer six services which are described briefly below, and you will find more information about each one on our web site www.opalservices.org.uk.

OPAL Clubs

Are social clubs for older people who are finding it more difficult to get out and about and may be finding it increasingly difficult to take part in social activities in their community without the support of others. We have six clubs located in Helsby, Frodsham, Kelsall, Malpas, Tattenhall and Tarporley.

OPAL BreakTime

Is a service aimed at “giving a break” to carers of older people living in the rural communities in West Cheshire.

OPAL Carers Connect

A free service for carers aged over 60, who are caring for someone over 60 in West Cheshire’s rural communities. Carers Connect offers the opportunity for carers to meet others in a similar position with recreational activities, information and training and health and wellbeing sessions. Local social events are arranged as well as visits to StoryHouse in Chester, local art exhibitions and other cultural opportunities.

OPAL GoOnLine

Is a drop-in internet service for older people living in rural areas, which enables them to connect electronically to family, friends and others, to learn about the world wide web (www) and the use of tablets, smart phones and laptops etc.

OPAL Branching Out (in Frodsham and Helsby)

Offers a range of ways to reconnect people with their local community and benefit from social connections. This includes a buddying scheme but also incorporates some of our other services.

OPAL What's Cooking

Is a locally based club with cooking at its heart which offers adults living in the Frodsham, Helsby, Farndon and the surrounding areas an opportunity to enjoy and experiment with all sorts of aspects of cooking and foods, whilst making new friends and meeting like-minded people.

Volunteering for Our Charity

A key feature of all of our OPAL Services is that they are delivered by volunteers working as a team, side by side with staff, who provide guidance and support. We know that without our volunteers we could not run them as we currently do, and we encourage volunteers to be actively involved in deciding how our services are run.

The success of what we do can be put down to the wide range of skills, knowledge and experiences that our volunteers bring to us and our OPAL Services. Their local knowledge helps us ensure local services are available to local people. We greatly appreciate the time and energy volunteers give so generously in supporting others, whether it be once a week, a fortnight or once a month. At the same time volunteers gain many benefits themselves from participating in our activities.

If it turns out that the volunteer role in question does not suit you, we will try and find you a more suitable role within the organisation. If that is not possible we would recommend you contact Cheshire West Voluntary Action who may be able to assist you in finding a different role with another organisation.

Volunteer Agreement

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us, and what we hope to expect from you. It sets out the relationship between you as volunteer and OPAL and it is not intended to create an employment relationship between us.

What you can expect from us

OPAL will provide you with:

An introduction to the organisation and your volunteering role within it.

Training related to your responsibilities as a volunteer. We hope that you will take advantage of this to improve and maintain your skills.

A review of your volunteering role after three months. This will be carried out by your Organiser.

Personal Liability insurance to cover you while you are fulfilling authorised volunteer work.

Injury insurance for injuries incurred while fulfilling your authorised volunteer work.

Reimbursement of your expenses. We do not want you to be disadvantaged financially as a result of your volunteering. Therefore we will therefore provide you with:

- Your travel expenses to and from your service location.
- Any additional expenses or any additional travel costs outside those normally incurred. Please agree these in advance with your Organiser. Please submitted all your expenses with receipts, to your Organiser.

What we expect from you

At recruitment, to provide two references from people not related to you and who you have known for at least two years.

For certain roles agree to undertake a basic check by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

To agree to us holding certain personal data about you, as set out in our Privacy Policy.

To take part in induction and further training.

To follow our policies and procedures.

To undertake your volunteering as arranged and let your Service's Organiser know as soon as possible if you are unable to attend.

To treat everybody with respect.

To report any concerns or problems to your Organiser about your volunteering and the people you help.

To attend an annual review meeting with your Organiser.

To support our charity and its aims.

To let us know if you have any ideas about how to improve our services and the way we work.

To contact your Organiser or the Volunteer Coordinator if you would like to change the arrangements for your volunteering or move to a different kind of volunteering.

Induction and Training

You will be given “on the job” training and asked to read any relevant policies and procedures.

You will be given the opportunity to attend more formal training where available and appropriate. This will include Emergency Aid training, Safeguarding Awareness, Moving and Handling and for all volunteer cooks, mandatory Basic Food Safety Level Two.

Policies and Procedures

As with all organisations, we have a series of policies and procedures which everyone must follow, in order that we comply with the law. Reference to these can be found within this volunteer handbook and full copies are available from your Organiser.

Support and Supervision

Our charity is a small and friendly organisation where volunteers work closely together and alongside staff (Organisers) at times. Support and supervision is ongoing. Should you require a one to one supervision session, you can contact your Organiser to arrange this. All volunteers are given the chance on a regular basis to meet with their Organiser to discuss and review their volunteering.

Reimbursement

Travel by car is reimbursed at a rate of 45p per mile (as of February 2020) by completing a Travel Expenses Form that can be obtained from your Organiser. Other travel expenses will be reimbursed upon receipt of bus/ train/car parking tickets, using this same form. We ask that volunteers claim their travel expenses during the financial year in which they were incurred, but we accept that in very exceptional circumstances, such as ill health, this may not always be possible.

Should you wish to turn your travel expenses into a donation to us, please complete the relevant section at the bottom of the Travel Expenses Form. Other expenses can also be turned into a donation, but it does require you to complete a claim form first and then donate it back to us, using Gift Aid if you are eligible as a tax payer. Your Organiser can explain this further and the reasoning behind it.

Should you purchase items as agreed for an OPAL Club, on the presentation of a receipt, you are able to claim using the cash sheet system at the Club. Your Organiser will explain the process to you.

Insurance

As a volunteer, you are covered under Public Liability Insurance and Employee Liability Insurance when undertaking agreed voluntary work while delivering one of our OPAL Services.

However our insurance does not cover loss or damage to volunteers' personal belongings.

As a volunteer car driver for club members or clients, you must ensure that your car insurance company knows that you are driving on an occasional basis, in a non-paid capacity for us. Most insurance companies class voluntary work as being of a “social and domestic” nature which does not necessitate an increase in premium. You can talk to your Organiser if this presents a problem with your insurer, or an extra premium is requested from your insurance company.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Policy should be read in addition to the following key points:

- You should not attempt to carry out any task that may injure yourself, members, clients or staff. Although some tasks may appear simple they may have health and safety implications.
- If you see a hazard or potential hazard you should report it to your Key Volunteer (at OPAL Clubs) or to your Organiser immediately.
- Everyone has a responsibility to take reasonable care for his/her own health and safety and for that of others.
- OPAL BreakTime volunteers are provided with an information sheet pertaining to each individual and carer they support. This also contains a risk assessment
- Venues used by us in providing OPAL Services are subject to appropriate risk assessments.

First Aid

As a volunteer, you are expected to attend Emergency Aid training arranged by the organisation, though you are under no obligation to administer First Aid to anyone. There is a First Aid box in each of the OPAL Clubs, including in each kitchen, and each Organiser has access to a First Aid kit at all times.

Accidents whilst volunteering, no matter how minor, must be recorded in the venue's Accident Book. Also an OPAL Accident-Incident Report Form must be completed either by you or your Organiser. For OPAL Club volunteers these forms are available at each club or directly from your Organiser. OPAL BreakTime and OPAL GoOnLine volunteers must report any accidents and incidents to their Organiser who will complete the required forms with their assistance.

Emergency Evacuation / Fire Procedures

Each club / venue has a specific procedure which is outlined on a notice to be found in each room. Each club has its own fire evacuation plan and you will be given a copy.

In the event of suspecting or finding a fire:

- Sound the alarm;
- Contact the fire service;
- Evacuate the premises, helping members/clients;
- Check everyone has left the building; and
- Go to the relevant assembly point.

To summarise it is:-

Get Out, Call the Fire Brigade Out, Stay Out.

Cooking, Serving Food and Refreshments

If you are offering to be a volunteer cook or help in the kitchen, you will be asked to undertake Food Safety training and there is an Information Sheet for volunteers who serve food and refreshments.

Comments, Suggestions and Complaints

We welcome comments and suggestions from volunteers, members/clients and carers/families because it is only by working together we can improve our services.

We want you to be happy while you are volunteering with us, so if you have any problems or concerns, please talk to your Organiser as soon as possible, and we shall try to sort them out promptly.

You can ask for a copy of our Complaints Procedure from any of our staff or trustees at any time. The Procedure has 4 stages, Informal, Formal, Review and Appeal and we aim to attend to matters confidentially and as quickly as possible. We view it as important to settle any matter as near to the point of origin as possible.

Keeping People Safe/Safeguarding

If you have any concerns about the welfare and safety of any of our members/clients, please talk to your Organiser as soon as possible. We have a procedure which enables us to report serious matters to Cheshire West and Chester Council under their Safe Guarding Adults Procedures.

Equal Opportunities

Our charity is committed to being an equal opportunities employer, decision maker and service provider. We strive to be an organisation which values all staff, volunteers and individuals positively. No user of our services, volunteer or member of staff should be discriminated against for any reason.

Treating People with Respect and Promoting Independence

We all wish to be treated with respect and our views taken seriously however much they may differ from other people's. We recognise that other people may choose to live a very different way from ourselves, and it is not our place to make judgements about this. We should not talk over people or talk for them as if they are not there.

In our OPAL Services we try and encourage people to be as independent as possible and do things for themselves, even if it may be quicker and easier for us to undertake the task for the older person.

Confidentiality

Whilst you are an OPAL volunteer you will probably hear and learn much about the personal lives of the older people who receive a service from us. It is important that you respect and keep confidential such information. You must not use the information for your own benefit and only disclose it when required or permitted to do so by law. Your Organiser will give you an Information Sheet on this subject.

If you are told something that causes you to be seriously concerned about someone's health, well-being or safety, you will need to ask them if you can share it with your Organiser. If they refuse, and you consider that they are in serious danger you will need to explain that you must break their confidence and report the matter to your Organiser.

If someone starts to tell you something in confidence and asks that you do not to tell anyone, you will need to stop them and explain that this may not be possible if you believe there is any risk to their health, well-being or safety.

However, in an emergency situation, it may be necessary to divulge confidential information to the emergency services and other medical staff without the older person's permission.

When it comes to paperwork about members/clients, such as rotas with people's contact details on, please keep them secure at all times, do not share them with anyone else and destroy them once you no longer need them or they are out of date. If paperwork with people's names and contact details is lost or mislaid, you must report this to your Organiser.

Data Protection

We are committed to providing a confidential service to all the people who use and are involved with our services. We follow the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and do not pass on staff, volunteer and service users details to third parties without their permission. You have a responsibility to keep all personal information (both paper and electronic) you receive safe. GDPR training is available for all OPAL volunteers. Please ask your Organiser about this.

Photographs, Films or Videos.

Please do not take any photographs, films or videos of our members/clients and other volunteers without first asking their permission. Please ask before you take the image. They may refuse. These images may be taken for your personal use, but you may not use them in the media (press, web sites, Facebook, Twitter etc.) without explicit permission both from the member/client and from OPAL. They must be properly informed of the use you are making of the image(s).

Everyone, who is a volunteer or receives a service from OPAL has completed a Consent Form and they may or may not have given permission for their images to be taken or used in publicity. This must be checked by your Organiser before the images are used and permission given.

We will not take or use any images of you in the media without your prior permission. If you give us permission we will not identify you by giving your full name or address.

Lone Working/Volunteering

We are aware that there may be times when you are on your own when volunteering. We will try and keep such instances to a minimum, but where this not possible, as is the case for many OPAL BreakTime volunteers, your Organiser will have undertaken steps to assess and control any risks where necessary, before you undertake your voluntary work. You are of course expected to take reasonable care of yourself. For example, we recommend that you carry a fully charged mobile phone with you and let someone (e.g. family member, friend or your Organiser) know where you are going and when

you are expected to return. More information can be found in our Information Sheet on Lone Working, available from your Organiser.

Payments, Accepting Donations and Gifts

Please do not accept any payment from members, clients, families or anyone else for the voluntary work you undertake for us other than the member fees payable for certain of our services e.g. the OPAL Clubs.

If you are offered any money, please explain that you can't accept it personally, but that you could receive it as a donation to OPAL for one of its OPAL Services. In such cases please inform your Organiser, who will organise for a receipt/letter of thanks to be given to the donor. Please check with your Organiser for the name the cheque should be made payable to.

You may feel it appropriate to mention to the donor that our charity is able to claim Gift Aid from the "tax man" (i.e. HMRC) on the personal donations we receive. All the donor has to do is to confirm to us that they are tax payers and provide their name and address. Your Organiser will arrange this. If we can claim Gift Aid, it increases a donation by 25% (as at February 2020).

From time to time volunteers are given personal gifts from the older people they help, especially at Christmas time. Small inexpensive gifts may be accepted, but they must be reported to your Organiser. If you wish to give the gift as a raffle prize or in the case of a box of biscuits or chocolates to share with other volunteers or members you need to let the donor know this is your intention.

When it comes to large and/or valuable gifts, they must not be accepted by you. You will need to politely explain this to the donor, saying that you will contact your Organiser to discuss the matter. Our charity may not be able to accept some gifts of this sort, or we may be able to use them to raise funds, such as in a raffle, if that is acceptable to the donor.

Leaving the Organisation as a Volunteer

We value the hard work and commitment you give but recognise that you may eventually want to leave for a variety of reasons. We would be grateful if you can give us as much notice as possible, so that we have time to find someone else to take your place. We would be interested to have a discussion with you before you leave so that we can learn from your experience of being a volunteer with us.

Thank you for making time to read this handbook and familiarising yourself with our approach to volunteering.