



Justlife

**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS PROJECT
HANDBOOK**

November 2022

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Justlife Mission and Vision

We work with people who are close to the streets.

Justlife is in existence because we know that every time we do not act, another person living in unsupported temporary accommodation suffers. They suffer with deteriorating mental and physical health, become victims of crime, lose control of their life, drop off the bottom rung of the housing ladder or die prematurely.

Our vision is clear and simple...

To make people's experience of housing vulnerability as short, safe and healthy as possible.

How do we achieve the vision?

Frontline working

Our frontline services have a dual strategy: to PREVENT people falling into homelessness and to PROGRESS those who are homeless towards and into safe, healthy and stable lifestyles. Our skilled frontline workers use knowledge, experience and training to carry out support work and are empowered to make person centered decisions. We work together in teams to learn, evaluate and modify practice on an ongoing basis.

Influencing the sector

We are one of the only organisations specialising in working alongside those living in unsupported temporary accommodation. We are using our expertise and learning to inform practice across the sector through relationships, events, strategic partnerships, networks and consultancy.

Improving policy

We engage with decision makers and those involved in policy at a national and local level, to share our learning from the frontline and research, informing policy which affects our service users.

An introduction to the Social Connection Project

Justlife's Social Connection Project provides support to people moving away from homelessness who want to overcome isolation and social barriers.

The project consists of a team of volunteer befrienders who meet one-to-one with clients and do an activity of their choice, whether that's going for a walk, trying something new, or simply meeting up for a coffee and chat.

The SCP also provides wellbeing, creative, employability themed workshops, community activities, trips, and outings for our clients.

Our Aims

The Social Connection Project aims to strengthen people's resilience and independence, empower them to take control of their lives, and reduce the risk of them returning to homelessness.

How it works

The befriending relationships are based around regular one-to-one meetings in the community where people spend time together, share experiences and join in with community activities.

Volunteers support clients in:

- Identifying their strengths and interests
- Researching appropriate activities in the community
- Attending community activities
- Increasing resilience through the development of self-management skills
- Becoming involved with activities that benefit physical and mental health.

Where possible (or requested) we aim to match people with shared interests and hobbies, identities, or life experiences.

Our outcomes

Community-focused, relationship-building projects such as Social Connection decrease the risk of people returning to homelessness by addressing the barriers, they face to living a healthy, stable, and safe lifestyle. Our outcomes include:

- Improved community engagement
- Improved wellbeing
- Development of a support network
- Establishment of meaningful connections and relationships

The Social Connection Project can be adapted to function by phone or by Zoom.

Social Connection Volunteer Role

Responsible to and supported by: Volunteer Coordinator

Purpose of the Role:

People experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation are by virtue of their circumstances vulnerable and are at greater risk of being disconnected (or disconnecting) from support and services. The breakdown of familial or other close relationships is one of the top causes of homelessness that can leave individuals distanced from the everyday contact that would ordinarily be drawn upon in difficult times.

The purpose of this role is to support people moving away from homelessness to build stronger links with their communities facilitated through regular and meaningful contact.

Tasks:

The following tasks are asked of our Social Connection Volunteer Befrienders:

- Meet regularly with your match in the community and plan the types of activities you want to do together.
- Relay any concerns arising from your meetings, or contact, with your match to the coordinator (or as per other guidance)
- Participate in monthly 1-2-1 volunteer supervision and any other support/training, as necessary.
- Complete any volunteer monitoring as required and in a timely way.
- Satisfy any initial and ongoing recruitment and vetting checks necessary to the role.

By accepting this volunteering role with us, our volunteers are agreeing to:

- Treat people **equally** and with **respect**
- Observe **confidentiality** and **data protection**.
- Be **reliable** and **committed**.
- Volunteer within the policies and guidelines of Justlife

Hours and Commitment:

A volunteer-client match is anticipated to last a minimum of 6 months.

Volunteers make contact with their matches a minimum of once a week.

Meetings are not expected to last more than 60 / 90 minutes. Contact may be made more frequently but it is suggested no more than twice a week to avoid situations of dependency and to ensure a pattern that can be reasonably maintained over a 6-month period.

Contact will be set up by the volunteer and client at a time mutually agreeable to them both.

Location: Face to face meetings in a community space.

Benefits:

- Involvement in a **vital community project** that helps to keep people accommodated.
- The chance to make some feel like a member of their community, **valued and respected**.

- The opportunity to connect with your **community** in a different way and broaden your life perspective through an increased understanding and knowledge of the issues facing vulnerable people.
- Access to volunteer expenses
- The chance to be a part of the Justlife community with the opportunity to meet and make friends with other like-minded people.
- The opportunity to develop your volunteering role to other areas of Justlife.

What are we looking for in our Social Connection volunteer befrienders?

- **Friendly and communicative** with the ability to engage with a diverse group of people.
- A good understanding of **boundaries**
- Ability to be **non-judgmental** and treat all clients with **sensitivity and respect**, whatever their backgrounds, opinions, cultural and ethical beliefs
- Commitment to the **welfare, well-being, and safeguarding** of vulnerable people
- Excellent **communication and listening** skills and an ability to make topics of discussion understandable to both young people and adults.
- **Patience** and the ability to remain calm.
- **Reliability and commitment**
- No formal qualifications are required but experience with people who have experience homelessness or unsettled housing is helpful.

Restrictions

We require our Social Connection Volunteers to be age 18+.

Recruitment requirements and DBS checks

Recruitment to this role is subject to the satisfactory completion of:

- Volunteer application
- Volunteer applicant interview
- A basic DBS check (upon application and then carried out every three years as set out in our DBS Policy)
- 2 x satisfactory references
- Volunteer training comprising:
 - Online training resource
 - Discussion training on zoom

- Completion of quiz
- The supply of ALL associated recruitment paperwork

Support and Training

We place great emphasis upon supporting our volunteers and ensuring that people are happy in their role. Support to volunteers includes access to:

Supervisions: a monthly opportunity for a 1-2-1 discussion with your coordinator to chat about your role, how you're doing, and the opportunity to feedback on the service.

Peer support: opportunity to come together as a group of volunteers, to talk through your experiences and make connections with others.

Access to staff support

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, you will have telephone access to the volunteer coordinator **Raodot Olayiwola** between 9.00-5.00pm using the following number 📞 **07523 671742**. On other days of the week, you can call the office **0161 2855888** or send an email to scpmanchester@justlife.org.uk.

Who do we work with?

Most clients will be living in emergency accommodation. Generally, this accommodation is of poor quality, with each person having a small room with shared bathroom facilities. They will often have very inadequate cooking facilities. Emergency accommodation is intended to be short term; however, most people live there for more than a year and some people for many years with few prospects available for moving on. Living in such accommodation will have negative effects on mental and physical health.

We will accept on to the Social Connection Project people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness and are ready and wanting to engage with support to overcome isolation. We accept individuals in supported accommodation situations and in more stable accommodation i.e., private rented (PRS) BHCC accommodation.

We will open this activity up to people already known to Justlife as well as accepting referrals from other agencies in Manchester and client self-referrals.

Each person accepted onto the scheme must be accompanied by completed referral paperwork and will be fully assessed by a Social Connection coordinator as to their suitability.

The referral process gives an initial overview of the clients:

- Circumstances i.e., experiencing loneliness isolation.
- How they think the project will benefit them
- Identify know risk or specific needs or requirements.

This assessment requires people to:

- be ready to engage with the project.
- build a meaningful relationship with their volunteer.

The assessment process also involves discussing their interests/hobbies and finding out what they would like to do with a volunteer befriender. Through these conversations, we begin to piece together a rough plan of what they want from their experience.

We also talk about who they want to be paired with. This might center around common interests, lived experiences or a specific skill set. We know it's incredibly important to talk about identity and explore whether pairing people with someone from a similar background or from the same community is important to them, so that people feel comfortable and represented.

The assessment facilitates an open and honest dialogue around known risks and enables the coordinator to work with the client to come up with an agreed plan to manage known risks. e.g., if the client is at risk of relapsing or their mental health deteriorates. The assessment will also support clients with specific requirements to access the project where possible e.g., mobility issues.

How are you matched with a client?

The coordinator will use information gathered from the referral and assessment process as a starting point when considering which befriender to match with a client. They will also consider practical things such as when people are available to meet up in the community and how much time a volunteer is able to offer. They will utilise information the volunteer has supplied about themselves provided via the volunteer befriender profile and during the recruitment process i.e., application and informal interview.

Once the coordinator has an idea of which befriender will be matched with a client, they will contact each individual and share information with them. The aim is to give each party an understanding of their potential match and allows for questions and the opportunity to share any worries or concerns.

There is no pressure on either party to take things further to an initial introduction meeting.

Introductions

An introductory meeting will be arranged once the client, volunteer befriender and coordinator have agreed to move forward and are happy with the potential matching. Introductions take place face-to-face in the community or can be arranged over the telephone.

Introductions are an opportunity for volunteer befrienders and clients to start to get to know each other and establish the beginnings of the befriending relationship. It's an ideal opportunity to start a conversation about what the client wants to gain from the befriending relationship and discuss how you will use the time you spend together. These conversations can be further explored as you get to know each other.

It's important to set expectations from the beginning of the befriending relationship. This should include:

- **Outlining your role** - be clear and specific. Say what your role is and isn't.
- **Time** – agree how long your meetups are expected to last.
- **When and where** – agree the day and time when you will meet and where.
- **Communication** – talk about how you will communicate with each other, for example. On the phone, text message or through email.
- **Endings** – From the beginning, talk about the timeframe over which you will be meeting. Clarity from the start helps to manage expectations and smooths the way for a good ending.

At the end of the introductory meeting there will be an option to arrange a second meetup, or this can be arranged through the SCP Coordinators providing both parties are agreeable.

The SCP Coordinators will nevertheless contact both the befriender and client shortly after the introductory meeting to see how it went.

Beyond the introductory meeting

After the initial introductory meeting and debriefing with the Social Connection Coordinators the befriending relationship will be encouraged to develop through regular contact. During this time the befriender and client will get to know each other and continue talking about how they will use their time and what activities they want to do together. This is also a time to iron out any issues which may arise. The coordinators will be available to support both parties, if required.

Reviews

From time to time the coordinator will arrange to meet up with the client and review how things are going for them. The review will offer an opportunity to reflect on their experience and measure the impact of the befriending relationship. The review will facilitate discussions about timeframes ensuring the client gets the most out of their befriending relationship and can work towards a 'good end' plan as the befriending relationship approaches its conclusion.

The first review takes place 6 weeks after the initial introductory meeting and then every 3 months. The coordinator will arrange further reviews if the relationship is expected to last longer-term.

Feedback

The Volunteer Coordinator will get in touch with befrienders shortly before each review and ask them to complete an online feedback form. This will support the review process and give befrienders an opportunity to share how they feel the befriending relationship is going and whether by engaging with the project their match has benefited or improved in specific outcomes.

Supervisions: a monthly opportunity for a 1-2-1 discussion with your coordinator to chat about your role, how things are going. There will be an opportunity to give feedback on the service.

Peer support: opportunity to come together as a group of volunteers, to talk through your experiences and make connections with others.

Volunteer Support

The well-being and safety of our volunteers is of paramount importance to us, and we offer a range of support to keep you happy in your role:

Your first solo meet-up

- The Volunteer coordinator will call you after your first meet up with your match to talk through how it went, pick up on any concerns and confirm whether you're happy to move forward to regular meetups.

Supervisions

- Every month your coordinator will contact you for a 1-2-1 supervision. This is a more structured chat about your role, how you're doing, and the opportunity to feedback on the service.
- The Volunteer coordinator can be contacted on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.00-5.00pm if you want to speak in-between de-briefs or supervisions. On other days you can call the office on 016128558888 or send an email to scpmanchester@justlife.org.uk

Peer Support Meeting

- There will be the opportunity to come together as a group of volunteers, to talk through your experiences and make connections with others.

Access to staff support

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, you will have telephone access to the volunteer coordinator **Raodot Olayiwola** between 9.00-5.00pm using the following number 📞 **07523 671742**. On other days of the week, you can call the office **0161 2855888** or send an email to scpmanchester@justlife.org.uk.

Claiming Expenses

As a volunteer, you can claim expenses for costs incurred through volunteering.

How to claim expenses:

We have an online staff resource called Breathe. This is where you can claim any expenses incurred by volunteering for Justlife.

Equality and Diversity

At Justlife we believe that no person should be treated less favourably than any other person because of their race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, disability, sex, age, marital status or sexual orientation.

What we do is enriched by the distinctive contributions which can be made by people of different backgrounds and experiences and through our Equality and Diversity policy we aim to bring difference and diversity into our organisation.

We ask all staff, volunteers and trustees involved in the delivery of our services to uphold this belief by adopting a non-judgmental approach which fosters equality, fairness and respect. In practice this means:

- Not preaching our beliefs to others
- Being respectful of the differing views that may be held in respect to faith, politics and other cultures bringing up racial, religious, tribal conflicts or politics.
- Avoiding assumptions based on gender, sexuality or relationship status.

As a volunteer, you should expect to be treated in the same way.

Discrimination

Discrimination can be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. It often occurs as a result of prejudice and stereotyping and can take many forms including:

- Direct Discrimination – treating one person less favourably than others.
- Indirect discrimination – creating a condition, term of employment, or other requirement, which cannot be justified, and which in practice excludes people from certain groups.
- Institutional Discrimination – the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service or employment condition to people from certain groups.
- Harassment – individuals or groups of individuals are harassed or abused because they

are from certain groups.

- Victimisation – where a person is treated less favourably because they have, or it is suspected that they will pursue their rights to equality.

Every volunteer has a responsibility not to discriminate against anyone they come into contact with whilst carrying out their role. It is everyone's responsibility to promote a supportive environment where discrimination cannot flourish. Discrimination contravenes our policies and breaks the law. Any discriminatory behaviour or victimisation may lead us to terminating the volunteer role with Justlife.

We will actively challenge – in a calm, clear and respectful way - any inappropriate comments or behaviour from staff, volunteers or people we work with, where we feel that someone is being discriminated against and support you to do likewise.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

The careful and correct treatment of data and information that we know about the volunteers, service users and staff we work with is a responsibility we take very seriously.

Personal data is information about a person which is identifiable as being about them. It can be stored electronically or on paper and includes images and audio recordings as well as written information.

Data protection is about how we, as an organisation, ensure we protect the rights and privacy of individuals, and comply with the law, when collecting, storing, using, amending, sharing, destroying or deleting personal data. Our Data Protection and Confidentiality policy sets out our practices in this area and ensures we meet our responsibilities in this area.

What information do we share?

Befriender to client:

Social Connection Volunteers are asked to prepare a short paragraph about themselves outlining some information about themselves that will help us with the matching process. This will not include surnames, addresses or contact details. This information will be shared with the prospective client.

SCP Coordinator with Befriender

The SCP Coordinator will share a short bio about your potential match. This will include some background about them, what their interests and hobbies are and what they want from the befriending experience.

Third parties:

Justlife will at no point share data with third parties with the following exceptions:

- where there is explicit purpose to do so, and consent provided by the individual to whom the data/information relates.
- where there is a risk to self or others

What we ask of volunteers

Those involved in the project have signed consent forms understanding how information will be shared. On that basis:

- Keep the information available to you about the person you are matched with confidential at all times with the exception of the Volunteer coordinator or relevant Justlife Staff.
- Details or content should not be shared with family, friends or any other third party including in 'anonymised' format.
- Store information that you might hold on to your match e.g., contact telephone number in a secure place, preferably password protected, and then shred when not needed.

Information may be shared with the police or other statutory organisation in the case of an emergency e.g., where there is a risk to self or others.

Feedback and complaints

Volunteer feedback

We are committed to making volunteering with us a fantastic and fulfilling experience. We love to hear positive comments about your volunteering role, but we also need to hear if we can make things even better.

We will invite you to share feedback with us on the service at volunteer supervisions and will carry out surveys with our volunteers from time to time where your feedback will remain anonymous unless you would like us to contact you to discuss anything you have written.

Feedback helps us to continue to improve our service and ensure all our volunteers have the best experience possible.

Complaints procedure

We hope that by offering an open and transparent service you feel able to bring any concerns you have to us, and we can work through them together before they reach the stage of being a complaint. Please do speak to your Justlife Coordinators early about any concerns you have as a volunteer, or other staff member if more appropriate.

All formal complaints should be directed, either verbally or in writing, to the Justlife Director or where the complaint concerns the Director to the Justlife Chair of Board:

- **Director**, Simon Gale, simon@justlife.org.uk
- **Chair of Justlife**,

If the complainant has any difficulties with writing the complaint the coordinator or director can help with this, or the complainant can bring a friend or family member with them for support at any part of the process.

On receipt of any complaint Justlife's complaints policy will be implemented.

Key Numbers and Contact information

Volunteer Coordinator

Raodot Olayiwola

T: **07523 671742**

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