Support Group Volunteer

Role Description
Aware Volunteer Support Group Facilitators are responsible for facilitating regular support group meetings, which take place nationwide. The support groups are for individuals (or in some cases, relatives) who have experience of depression/anxiety, bipolar or related mood disorders and have an average of eight attendees. The meetings are facilitated by two volunteer facilitators, who receive initial and ongoing training from Aware. All volunteers adhere to Aware's ethos, policies and procedures.

Facilitators work on a rota basis, usually at the same venue and day/time of week. They are supported by and report to a Support Group Co-ordinator.

Person Description - Qualities and Skills
An Aware support group facilitator will be empathetic and possess good communication skills, have an ability to take direction and possess enthusiasm and passion for the area of mental health and/or for the work of Aware. The Aware support group facilitator must be respectful of others and understand the importance of being a good team player. He/She must be willing to make a long term commitment to volunteering with Aware and to participate in essential ongoing training.

Guiding Principles:
- To treat persons attending the support group meeting with dignity and respect, with due regard to the principles and guidelines of Aware.
- To facilitate the support group meeting in a non-judgemental manner and in accordance with Aware’s Confidentiality Policy.
- To facilitate the group to encourage problem solving through clarification, consideration of options and to encourage positive action.
- To promote pathways to recovery through the provision of literature and offering information on Aware’s additional services including Life Skills, Support Line, Support Mail, Lectures and our website where appropriate.
Commitment:

- To honour a two hour weekly commitment (*exclusive of travel*) for a minimum of eighteen months, on an agreed rota, following your training. It is important that volunteers adhere to the rota to support the stability, consistency and efficiency of the support group.

- To carry out the role as set out in the Aware Volunteer Agreement

- To participate in initial and ongoing training provided.

- To participate in any evaluations of the Service.

- To bring to the attention to the Support Group Co-ordinator or Service Manager any issues of concern regarding any aspect of your role as volunteer for Aware

- To act at all times according to the guidelines and Code of Practice of Aware.

Duties:

- Two facilitators are present for support group to take place

- Team to identify one person who takes responsibility for drawing up roster

- Team to identify a facilitator to upload monthly statistics to Volunteer Area

- If a facilitator is not available, he/she organises appropriate cover for themselves

- If cover cannot be arranged by the Facilitator, the Coordinator is to be informed urgently, ideally with 24 hours’ notice.

- In the unlikely event that two facilitators are not available; the following is the process to arrange cancellation of a meeting:
  
  - Advise co-ordinator
  - Advise co-facilitator
  - Post apology notice at the meeting place with information stating that usual meeting will take place the following week
  - Offer apologies the following week
- Facilitators communicate directly to the Coordinator when there is conflict within the group and/or between group Facilitators

- Facilitators attend a minimum of two quarterly Facilitator Meetings per annum. Minutes/Action points are taken on a rota basis and sent to the support group co-ordinator for agreement, and then sent to all facilitators

- Facilitators will report via the volunteer section of the website any issues concerning 'confidentiality' as per the Aware Confidentiality Policy

- While meetings are treated in confidence (within the normal limits) facilitators are encouraged to discuss with the co-ordinator any issues, problems or fears they may have in relation to their role or arising from a meeting, as quickly as is practically possible

**Facilitator Duties At the meeting**

- Arrive 20/30 minutes prior to support group meeting time for opening/setup

- Engage in Pre-Brief with co-facilitator

- Display Aware literature

- Arrange seating in a circle

- Display signage directing people to meeting

- Meet and greet new/regular attendees on arrival

- Offer new person literature and establish where they heard about Aware

- Check that new people are at the right meeting & introduce to core group

- Respect the privacy of attendees

- Open and close meeting punctually

- Follow Aware facilitation approach

- Remove signage

- Offer wind-down (20 minutes) cup of tea, where possible

- Debrief with other Facilitator after close of meeting
• Complete post attendance stats on a weekly basis and upload on monthly basis via Volunteer Section of the Aware Website

• Distribute flyers/posters to promote group

• Order literature as required from Head Office

• Keep record and receipts of expenses incurred in your role as support group facilitator (tea, coffee)

• Furnish detailed expenses to Aware on a weekly/monthly basis using an Aware expenses form

Benefits of Volunteering with Aware:

• Full training provided.

• Ongoing support.

• Development of skill set.

• References provided upon completion of required period of service.*

• Out of pocket expenses covered.**

• Experience of working with a national organisation which strives for best practice and whose services are independently evaluated.

• Opportunities to progress with Aware.

* Details re provision of references outlined in section 4.5 of the Aware Volunteer Policy.

**Criteria and conditions apply.