



Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC

Volunteer Policy

Policy Owner: Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC

Date policy reviewed: 20.1.2026

Date policy approved: 20.1.2026

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Erin Singleton

Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC is an inclusive community group whose mission is to provide a welcoming space for older people to socialise and access support in a familiar, friendly café-style setting. We are dedicated to supporting vulnerable able older adults, particularly those living with dementia and their Carers.

We operate out of three hubs:

- St Michael & All Angels church on Egerton Rd, Preston PR2 1AJ
 - Sessions are held on the first 4 Tuesdays of the month from 1 – 3pm
- St Teresa's Social Centre on Queensway Drive, Penwortham PR1 0DS.
 - Sessions are held on the first 4 Wednesdays of the month from 12.30 – 2pm
- Our Lady & St Edward's Parish Centre on Marlborough Dr, Fulwood PR2 9UE
 - Sessions are held on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays from 12.30 – 2pm

The Blue Flamingo has three paid members of staff: Executive Director (ED) and two Session Coordinators (SC).

Our Ethos: Growth, Positivity, and Inclusion

The Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC promotes inclusivity with a 'no barrier to entry' ethos. This means we do our best to remove obstacles that would prevent people from attending our sessions. As Blue Flamingo is built on a reputation of trust, inclusion, confidentiality, and safety, we adhere to a policy of acting in the best interests of the people we serve. To maintain this, we ask all volunteers to commit to a shared ethos of Growth, Positivity, and Reflection:

- **Projecting a Positive Perspective:** While we all have difficult days, we strive to enter the Hub with a focus on being uplifting. We aim to leave outside frustrations or grievances at the door, ensuring our presence adds to the sanctuary of the space.
- **Uplifting One Another:** We are a team. We celebrate each other's successes and speak to—and about—our colleagues with kindness and respect.
- **A Culture of Reflection:** We view challenges as opportunities to ask, "How can we do this better?" We encourage an open-minded approach to feedback, seeing it as a tool for improving the vital services we provide.
- **Commitment to Growth and Understanding:** We approach every interaction with curiosity rather than judgment, seeking to understand different perspectives and growing together as a community.

Standards of Conduct: The heart of Blue Flamingo

To ensure the Hub remains a safe, consistent, and welcoming environment, we follow these clear standards of behaviour:

We DO:

- **Treat everyone with kindness, dignity, and respect:** This applies equally to members, staff, and fellow volunteers.
- **Set an example:** We model the calm, welcoming energy we want our members to feel.
- **Always tell the truth:** It is human to make mistakes; we value honesty and the opportunity to learn from them.
- **Protect Confidentiality:** What is shared in the Hub stays in the Hub.
- **Communicate Privately:** If you have a concern or need to signpost a member's issue, speak with the ED or SC privately to avoid being overheard or mistaken for whispering on the floor.
- **Alert a member of staff immediately if you have any safeguarding concerns or notice something that could impact the safety of the room.**

We DO NOT:

- **Use abusive, aggressive, or bullying language:** We have a zero-tolerance policy for hostility or exclusionary behaviour.
- **Play favourites:** we ensure our support is distributed fairly among all members.
- **Pass comments on member behaviours:** All observations must be shared with staff in private, never discussed as chatter among peers.
- **Engage in Peer Pressure:** We respect the boundaries of our colleagues; if a fellow volunteer does not wish to discuss a topic, that boundary must be respected immediately.
- **Disrupt the "Vibe":** We avoid withdrawing from the group to hold private, exclusionary discussions that negatively impact the collective energy of the session.
- **Speak or behave in a way that makes others feel unsafe or uncomfortable.**

Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are anyone who freely chooses to support Blue Flamingo CIC by giving their time, skills and experience without financial remuneration beyond out-of-pocket expenses (further outlined below under '**How do we pay volunteer expenses?**'). Volunteers are required to complete a DBS check (paid for by Blue Flamingo) and complete a Safeguarding Training course.

How do we recruit volunteers?

Recruitment is mostly informal and organic in nature ie: we would ask someone with a personal connection to dementia, who is from the local community who might also have a connection with another volunteer, the church or other volunteer-led organisation. We advertise on CVCL (University of Lancashire).

How do we make sure we treat all volunteers fairly?

Our ethos is that each volunteer contributes in the way that best suits them, based on their individual strengths and interests. Before our sessions formally begin, we aim to sit down for a quick informal chat. During these chats, the Director will aim to update volunteers on recent developments with the Hub. During these chat, volunteers are encouraged to speak with the ED or SCs to discuss any issues they may have.

How do we support and adapt roles to make them more accessible?

We want every volunteer to feel confident and comfortable in their role. If there are specific tasks you find challenging, or if your circumstances mean you work best in a particular way, we are committed to discussing how we can adapt your role to suit your strengths.

We recognise that volunteers often have a natural preference—whether that’s the focus and pace of the kitchen or the social engagement of being ‘on the floor.’ We also understand that for many, variety is key to staying engaged and managing energy levels.

While we strive to honour your preferred area, we ask for a spirit of flexibility. Being willing to step into different roles not only helps the team but can also be a helpful way to refresh your focus or take a sensory break if one environment becomes overwhelming. We encourage volunteers to communicate with one another, so that if you need a change of pace during a session, you can work together to make that happen. In return, we ask that you be open to supporting the Hub wherever the need is greatest.

What is our volunteer induction and training process?

We believe in a supportive and personal approach to joining our team. Before you begin, our Executive Director will meet with you to discuss your background, interests, and why you’d like to join us.

The 'Experience' Period: We want you to feel sure that Blue Flamingo is the right fit for you. Your first visit is an opportunity to observe a session first-hand and get a feel for our community without any immediate commitment. Following this, we will gradually introduce you to different aspects of the Hub.

Becoming a Regular Volunteer: Once you decide to join us regularly, we require the following to ensure the safety of our community:

- **DBS Check:** Completed upon joining and renewed every 3 years.
- **Safeguarding Training:** An initial online course must be completed, with refresher training required every 2 years.

On-Site Orientation: We value our existing team, so we always notify current volunteers when someone new is joining and provide in-person introductions. Because our day-to-day tasks are straightforward, practical training is provided during the session set-up.

Ongoing Development: We are committed to your growth. Throughout the year, we offer professional development opportunities. Some of these are mandatory (such as Safeguarding updates and First Aid) to ensure we all maintain the highest standards of care.

How do we pay volunteer expenses?

We are incredibly grateful for the time and resources our volunteers share with us. To ensure our charity's funds are managed responsibly, we use the following guidelines:

Food and Contributions:

- **Lunch:** All volunteers are warmly invited to enjoy lunch from our buffet table during their session.
- **Donations:** We are always grateful when volunteers choose to make or purchase food for the Hub. Please note that these are considered kind donations unless the ED has specifically and explicitly requested the purchase for a session.

Travel and Out-of-Pocket Expenses:

- **Reimbursement:** We do not want anyone to be out of pocket because they chose to volunteer. We offer reimbursement for reasonable travel costs (such as local bus or train fares) incurred to attend sessions.
- **The Process:** To claim an expense, please keep your receipt or ticket and pass it to the ED.
- **Pre-Approval:** If you are ever unsure whether an expense can be covered, please have a quick chat with the ED **before** you make the purchase. This avoids any confusion later.

All reimbursements are made at the discretion of the ED and the Board to ensure we stay within our annual budget.

What is our supervision and support process for volunteers?

At Blue Flamingo, we believe that the wellbeing of our volunteers is just as important as the wellbeing of our members. To ensure everyone feels supported, we use a tiered approach:

- **Day-to-Day Support:** The Executive Director (ED) provides direct supervision for all volunteers, with active support from our Session Coordinators (SCs). During sessions, they will always be available to answer questions or provide guidance.

- **Open Communication:** We foster a culture of transparency. We encourage volunteers to share ideas, ask questions or raise concerns as they arise.
- **Individual Check-ins:** Periodically, the ED will check in with volunteers individually. This is an opportunity for a 'wellbeing chat'—to discuss how you are enjoying your role, identify any training needs and ensure you feel comfortable in the Hub environment.
- **Peer Support:** We encourage a 'buddy system' where volunteers look out for one another, ensuring that the friendly and inclusive atmosphere of the Hub starts with how we treat our team. This buddy system is also used to help new volunteers settle in; we will rotate these pairings to ensure the whole team stays connected and inclusive.
- **Formal Support:** If a significant issue or safeguarding concern arises, the ED will arrange a private meeting to provide dedicated support and ensure a clear plan is put in place.
- **Self-Monitoring:** We encourage volunteers to be mindful of their own emotional and physical limits. If a member's behaviour or a conversation makes you feel uncomfortable, we empower you to set a boundary politely and directly in the first instance (e.g., 'I'm not comfortable discussing that, let's talk about something else'). If the behaviour continues or if you do not feel safe addressing it directly, please bring it to the attention of the ED or SC immediately. Setting boundaries is a healthy part of community work; you will always be supported by the Board for prioritising your wellbeing and safety.

What is our health and safety policy?

Your safety is our absolute priority. We want you to enjoy your time at Blue Flamingo without risk to your physical or mental wellbeing.

- **Personal Boundaries:** You will never be asked to undertake any task that is unsafe or that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you are asked to do something you don't feel confident doing—whether it's lifting a table or handling a difficult conversation—you have the full support of the Board to say 'no' or ask for assistance.
- **Reporting Hazards:** If you notice a spill, a trip hazard or a piece of faulty equipment, please report it to the SC or the ED immediately so we can make the area safe.
- **Food Safety:** As we serve food, we ask all volunteers to follow basic hygiene practices. If you are helping prepare food in the kitchen, you will be required to take an online Food Hygiene and Safety course. This is not required for serving food or drinks.

- **Your Wellbeing:** Health and Safety isn't just physical. If you find a session emotionally draining or stressful, please speak to the ED. We are committed to supporting your mental health as a volunteer.

For a comprehensive list of our procedures (including fire safety and first aid), please refer to the full **Blue Flamingo Health & Safety Policy**, which is available in our resources area.

What is the volunteers' role in confidentiality and data protection?

To protect the privacy and dignity of our members, all volunteers must adhere to the following standards of confidentiality:

- **Personal Information:** Volunteers do not have access to our formal member database. Any personal information you may learn through conversation (such as a member's health status, address, or personal struggles) must be kept strictly confidential and should not be discussed outside of the Hub. Where an issue is disclosed which you think requires signposting, please speak with the SC or ED privately to ensure members do not feel they are being observed or discussed from afar.
- **Photography and Social Media:** To protect the privacy of our members, volunteers are not authorised to take photos of members using their personal devices. All photos and videos must be taken using the Blue Flamingo tablet, which will be available at all of our sessions and is passcode protected. Only authorised staff will post images and photos to Blue Flamingo WhatsApp groups and on social media platforms.
- **The Volunteer WhatsApp Group:** Occasionally, photos may be shared within our private volunteer WhatsApp group to celebrate special moments or provide updates. These images are for internal team use only and **must not** be shared, forwarded, or posted elsewhere without explicit consent from the ED.
- **Data Management:** The ED maintains all official records (including contact details and consent forms) in a secure location. We only collect data that is necessary for the safety and operation of the cafe, such as emergency contact numbers and photo consent.
- **Reporting Concerns:** If a member or volunteer shares information with you that causes a safeguarding concern, this should be reported immediately and privately to the Executive Director (who is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead) or the Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Confidentiality does not mean keeping secrets that involve a risk of harm.

By volunteering with us, you agree to respect the privacy of our members and your fellow volunteers at all times.

What is our problem solving and complaints procedure for volunteers?

We believe that the best ideas come from our team, and we want to ensure that any concerns are dealt with fairly and quickly.

Operational Suggestions & Feedback

- **Regular check-ins:** We hold regular meetings to discuss how the café is running. This is the primary space for operational suggestions and "way of working" improvements.
- **Open Channels:** Our volunteer WhatsApp group and email threads are for day-to-day coordination and sharing positive updates.
- **ED/SC Support:** The Executive Director and Session Coordinators are always available for informal "wellbeing checks" to ensure you are comfortable in your role.

Formal Complaints & Grievances If you have a serious concern, a disagreement with a Board decision or a conflict with another member of the team, we ask that you follow this process:

- **Step 1 (Informal):** Speak privately with the ED. Most issues can be resolved through a calm, one-on-one conversation.
- **Step 2 (Formal):** If the matter is not resolved, or if the complaint is about the ED, you should submit your concern in writing to the Board of Directors.
- **Professional Conduct:** While a complaint is being investigated, we ask that volunteers maintain professional confidentiality. Discussing private grievances with other volunteers or members during Hub hours is not permitted, as it impacts the "friendly and safe" atmosphere we promise our beneficiaries.

We are committed to listening to you and adapting our methods to meet the changing needs of our community.

The contact details for our Board of Directors is as follows:

Claire Beranek: crberanek@outlook.com

Anna Nunn: indi_anna@hotmail.com

David Singleton: mrandsrshandymanagementservices@gmail.com

Erin Singleton: theblueflamingocafe@gmail.com

Blue Flamingo CIC volunteer roles include:

Set-up:

- set tables out in church hall
- check toilets are suitable & ready for use
- set tables with activities and games (these change regularly; unless the ED or SC advise on this, volunteers are welcome to take their initiative with what gets set out)
- set up Lending Library table with resources
- put name labels and pens on tables
- put 'open today' A-board out on pavement at the entrance to the carpark
- One volunteer stationed on the door to welcome members

Kitchen:

- power up boiler
- plate up food
- set up food tables with tablecloths, ensuring no contamination in gluten-free section
- brew coffee & tea and serve drinks to order when members arrive
- wash up dishes throughout the session as needed
- refill food items where possible
- collect dirty cups and plates from hall as needed

Greeting:

- offer a warm welcome to members as they arrive
- take note of names on the register
- any new members should complete a new member form and a photo consent form and be asked if they'd like to add their name to our mailing list, asking them to only complete information they feel comfortable sharing

During the session:

- chat with members to get to know them and get an idea of their needs (this is done as a very casual but genuine interaction)
- engage in games or other activities with members and help with special activities as needed
- encourage members in movement – this could be seated movement or dancing on their feet – if it is safe to do so and in a way that meets the mobility restrictions of the person involved
- help members with seating if necessary
- signpost members to support where needed – this could include notifying ED or SC of any issues, handing out leaflets, making notes of issues, providing advice, signposting to professional services (NHS, GP, specialist charitable organisations, OT, SALT, etc)

- offer support carrying refreshments or accessing the buffet – **but don't intervene unnecessarily** – we should respect an individual's preference for independence
- monitor the buffet table, taking away serving platters and replenishing the table with fresh food as required
- wait until a member has completely finished their food before clearing their plate; for many of our members living with dementia, eating can be a slow and challenging process – if we ask to take a plate too early, a member might instinctively agree to hand it over even if they are still hungry or haven't finished eating
- a volunteer or staff member will serve hot soup to protect members from burns

Main Hall Tidy-up:

- return resources (games, library items, etc) into boxes
- remove tablecloths, fold & put away
- take down tables and store in appropriate areas
- check bathrooms are in respectable order
- empty rubbish bins as needed
- sweep floor
- put open today A-board away
- one volunteer stationed on the door to support & guide members out the door safely

Kitchen Tidy-up:

- clear any leftover food from tables
- soiled tablecloths, tea towels and aprons to be given to ED or SC for laundering
- turn off boiler
- clean coffee machine (being sure to empty filter cavity)
- wipe down surfaces
- sweep floor

Volunteer arrival times and numbers:

- Tuesdays in Ashton: from 12pm (those assisting with table set-up at 11am)
- Wednesdays in Penwortham: from 11.30am
- Thursdays in Fulwood: from 12pm