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Document Title:	Volunteer Policy
Document Purpose:	The purpose of this Volunteer Policy is to outline how SEND the Right Message (STRM) involves, supports, and values its volunteers. It ensures a consistent and fair approach to recruitment, management, and recognition of volunteers, while promoting a safe, inclusive, and positive environment for everyone.
Document Statement:	Volunteers are an essential part of STRM. They contribute their time, skills, and lived experience to help us support neurodivergent and/or disabled children, young people, and their families. This policy applies to all volunteers across community sessions, events, administrative support, and outreach programmes. It reflects STRM's commitment to creating a rewarding volunteering experience where every individual feels valued and supported.
Document Application:	Organisation wide
Responsible for Implementation:	Trustees, CEO and Volunteer Coordinator
Author:	Maggie Cleary
Effective date:	14-09-25
Review/Expiry date:	This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, guidance, or STRM's volunteering practice.
<u>Associated Documents</u> This Volunteer Policy should be read alongside: Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy Safeguarding Adults Policy Code of Conduct Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Data Protection & GDPR Policy Health & Safety Policy Lone Working Policy Volunteer Expenses Policy Complaints Policy	
<u>Signed</u> Chair of Trustees <i>Robert Carr</i> Date: 14-09-25	

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1. Introduction

This Volunteer Policy outlines how SEND the Right Message (STRM) recruits, supports, manages, and recognises volunteers. It sets out our shared expectations to ensure a positive, inclusive, and rewarding volunteering experience for everyone involved.

Volunteers play a vital role in helping us support neurodivergent and/or disabled children, young people, and their families. This policy applies to all volunteers across community sessions, events, administrative support, and outreach programmes.

For more detailed guidance and practical information, please refer to the Volunteer Handbook.

2. Our Commitment to Volunteers

We value the time, skills, and dedication that our volunteers contribute. STRM is committed to ensuring that volunteering with us is mutually beneficial, inclusive, and meaningful. STRM will:

- Provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
- Offer clear role descriptions so volunteers understand their responsibilities.
- Deliver appropriate training and ongoing support.
- Maintain regular communication, including feedback and updates.
- Recognise and appreciate volunteer contributions.
- Respect volunteers' time and boundaries, remaining flexible where possible.
- Reimburse pre-approved out-of-pocket expenses in line with our Expenses Policy.
- Listen to volunteer feedback and continuously improve the volunteering experience.

3. Recruitment & Selection

- Volunteer opportunities will be openly advertised to ensure fairness and accessibility.

- Interested individuals must complete a Volunteer Application Form.
- References may be required, depending on the role.
- Certain roles require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, in line with our Safeguarding Policies.
- Recruitment decisions will be based on suitability for the role and alignment with STRM's values and mission.
- STRM is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications from individuals of all backgrounds and abilities.

4. Induction & Training

- All volunteers will receive an induction covering STRM's mission, values, policies, and procedures.
- Role-specific training will be provided to ensure volunteers feel confident.

Mandatory training includes:

- Safeguarding
- GDPR/Data Protection
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Health & Safety

Where appropriate, ongoing training and development opportunities may be offered.

5. Volunteer Roles & Responsibilities

Volunteers are expected to:

- Carry out duties as outlined in their role description.
- Follow STRM's policies and procedures, including:
 - Safeguarding
 - Data Protection & GDPR
 - Health & Safety
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
 - Code of Conduct
- Communicate any issues or concerns promptly.
- Represent STRM positively in all interactions.
- Respect confidentiality at all times (see Section 7).

6. Safeguarding

STRM is committed to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

- All volunteers must complete safeguarding training before starting.
- Concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- STRM's Safeguarding Policy applies to all volunteers at all times.
- More information is available on the Safeguarding Board in the office.

7. Confidentiality & Non-Disclosure

Volunteers may have access to confidential or sensitive information.

- All such information must remain confidential during and after volunteering.

- Information must not be shared outside the scope of the role.
- STRM materials, resources, and intellectual property remain the sole property of STRM.
- Volunteers must not copy, share, or use STRM materials without written permission.

8. Data Protection & GDPR

STRM complies with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- Volunteers must handle data in accordance with STRM's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.
- Personal data must not be stored on personal devices without permission.
- All volunteers must complete a Consent Form before starting their role.
- Data breaches or suspected breaches must be reported immediately to the Data Protection Officer.

9. Health & Safety

STRM is committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers. Volunteers are expected to:

- Follow the Health & Safety Policy.
- Report hazards, risks, or incidents promptly.
- Use equipment safely and responsibly.

Risk assessments will be carried out for relevant activities.

10. Expenses

STRM will reimburse agreed, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses in line with the Volunteer Expenses Policy.

- Receipts must be provided.
- Claims should be submitted within 30 days of expenditure.

11. Insurance

STRM has insurance in place to cover volunteers while carrying out authorised activities.

This includes:

- Public liability cover.
- Personal accident cover (where applicable).

12. Support & Supervision

- Volunteers will be assigned a named point of contact.
- Regular check-ins will be offered to review progress and address concerns.
- Volunteers are encouraged to share experiences through reflection forms and meetings.

13. Recognition

STRM values volunteer contributions and will recognise them through:

- Informal thanks and feedback.
- Certificates of appreciation.
- Invitations to STRM events.

- Reference letters upon request.

14. Ending a Volunteer Role

- Volunteers may choose to leave at any time.
- STRM may conclude a role if policies are breached, safeguarding concerns arise, or the role is no longer required.
- Where possible, volunteers are asked to provide notice.
- Exit interviews may be offered to gather feedback.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, guidance, or STRM practice.