

Cardiff Women's Aid Volunteering Strategy *2019 - 2022*



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Forward

by **Dr Rachel Minto**, Chair,
Cardiff Women's Aid Board of Trustees

For over 45 years, Cardiff Women's Aid has been working with and for women and children in Cardiff. Driving all of our work is our commitment to the promotion of equality between women and men and ending violence against women and girls. We pursue these aims through providing 24/7 crisis support for those at risk of violence and abuse, offering a range of specialist support and recovery services, and undertaking preventative work.

We are a charity run by a fantastic team of dedicated staff who manage and deliver our services. However, we believe that volunteers have a valuable role to play in contributing to the services that we provide, and we are committed to the integration of volunteers within the Cardiff Women's Aid team. Indeed, this continues a legacy within our organisation with volunteers having played an important role in our history to date. Like our sister refuge organisations, Cardiff Women's Aid was built by volunteers. We will always be grateful to these women who laid the foundations for the services we offer today. As an organisation, we have recently decided to develop our capacity to support volunteers.

This Volunteering Strategy represents a concrete step on this pathway. By integrating volunteers within our team, with their wealth of expertise and experience, our aim is to provide an expanded service to women and children and a positive development opportunity to our volunteers. Indeed, we are fully committed to ensuring that volunteer involvement is a mutually beneficial experience for all concerned.

This Volunteering Strategy has been carefully co-produced by a Volunteering sub-group comprised of Trustees and staff members. The wider Cardiff Women's Aid staff team was also consulted, with their valuable feedback used to help shape the Strategy we present to you here. It has been developed in line with the values and guiding principles of Cardiff Women's Aid, and I am delighted that we now have such a thoughtful strategy to guide our work in this area.

The launch of the Strategy represents an exciting opportunity for us, and we very much look forward to welcoming more volunteers into the Cardiff Women's Aid team over the months and years ahead.



Cardiff Women's Aid's *vision for volunteering*

Cardiff Women's Aid's (CWA's) vision for volunteering is to create a *joined up, flexible, accessible volunteer service* and experience that brings added value to Cardiff Women's Aid through deep, impactful and meaningful experiences for both volunteers and survivors.

With this Volunteering Strategy, we set out CWA's ambitions to manage the growth of its volunteer service over the next three years to provide more varied support for survivors, and ensure that volunteers themselves are fully supported to enjoy and find enrichment in their volunteering roles.



Summary of Aims



The Aims

The strategic aims of the Volunteering Strategy for the next three years centre around the following three points, which will be discussed in greater detail in Section 7.

- ♦ **Structures:** developing infrastructure, governance and culture to support the planned growth of volunteering;
- ♦ **Experience:** ensuring every volunteer receives a positive and person-centred experience, and that survivor experience is enhanced through the use of volunteers;
- ♦ **Managed growth:** sustainable and meaningful growth of volunteering, which contributes to creating a cohesive society, social change, awareness-raising and a better response to survivors of abuse.

The Purpose

- ♦ The purpose of this strategy is to guide and support our actions around volunteering for the next three years.
- ♦ It will be used to ensure clarity and coherence around the purpose and definition of volunteering within CWA, as differentiated from paid roles.
- ♦ It demonstrates our dedication to improving volunteering and ensuring it is fit for purpose in the coming years.

The Audience

- ♦ This strategy demonstrates CWA's commitment to encouraging further discussion around volunteering through its anticipated audience of existing and prospective volunteers, partner agencies, funders, the Board, and Staff of Cardiff Women's Aid.



Volunteering is an **important expression of citizenship** and an *essential component of democracy*. It is the commitment of **time** and **energy** for the benefit of society and the community and it can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, *without concern for financial gain.*



Definition of a Volunteer

CWA uses the Welsh Government definition of volunteering

Volunteering at CWA today



Why we involve volunteers

Cardiff Women's Aid recognises that volunteering brings benefits to all involved. The volunteer can develop their skills, engage in a meaningful and enjoyable activity, and give back to a community that they care about.

Volunteering also has benefits beyond those to the individual giving their time. The services volunteers provide can bring great benefit to survivors, the organisation and wider society.

The advantages of involving volunteers with lived experience are particularly strong, as they can act as positive role models and show a "light at the end of the tunnel" to survivors who are struggling to regain confidence and a sense of self.

By involving volunteers

The understanding of domestic abuse and violence against women in our communities continues to grow, and we raise awareness of CWA's cause and activities;

Staff teams are supported to deliver more services with a greater reach, broadening the organisation's horizons and growing its strength;

A greater diversity of experiences, skills and perspectives are brought to CWA, expanding and strengthening our ability to engage with our community and opening new opportunities with wider networks;

Survivors are supported to give back to a cause they feel deeply about, in a way which is not professionalised, when they are ready to do so.



Our journey

Cardiff Women's Aid has always involved volunteers, and in fact, we began as a solely voluntary organisation.

Our position today is quite different from where we started, and we now ensure all front-line support services are provided by paid staff. However, volunteers provide added value to our services and are vital to our after-care, early intervention and prevention offerings, for example, counselling and our burgeoning Survivor Support Network.

Volunteering within the organisation has peaked and waned organically over the past 5 years without additional committed resources.

However, in the past year, with greater resources, our numbers of volunteers have started to grow,

standing currently at over 20, not including Trustees. We expect this number to continue to rise in the coming years. We are now in a place to invest seriously in expanding our volunteering offering in a managed way. As such, we have appointed a full time Volunteering Coordinator to organise and support volunteers.

We have recently redeveloped our Volunteer Policy and we are developing and improving all our policies and procedures which relate to volunteering to better suit how the volunteering landscape has changed over the last decade.

This strategy supports the direction of this growth and is a marker of our commitment to getting volunteering right for survivors, volunteers, the organisation and the communities we serve.

What do our volunteers currently do?



Growth areas

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What might volunteers do?

- ◆ Survivor experience analysts
- ◆ Awareness-raising and outreach into underserved communities, girls and young women
- ◆ Fundraising
- ◆ Social activities and events
- ◆ Campaigning and lobbying
- ◆ Drivers
- ◆ Befrienders
- ◆ Translators



Strategic Aims

CWA has developed three strategic aims, with three main targets within each aim.

To ensure that CWA develops the appropriate infrastructure, governance and culture to support the planned growth of volunteering.

- ♦ **Infrastructure:** To grow confidence and capability of volunteer management across CWA, ensuring appropriate resource and management structures are in place to grow the volunteering services.
- ♦ **Governance:** Continuous improvement and development of all volunteer policies and processes.
- ♦ **Culture:** To embed and integrate volunteering within the organisation, developing a culture of mutual understanding and respect between staff and volunteers.

Strategic Aim 1

Structures

To ensure every CWA volunteer receives a positive and person-centred experience.

- ♦ Review and refresh the volunteer journey and experience, ensuring it is responsive to both the needs of the volunteer and the organisation.
- ♦ Prioritise volunteer wellbeing, ensuring all volunteers receive appropriate training and support to be safe and confident in their roles, and to provide the greatest positive impact.
- ♦ Ensure volunteers are actively recognised and that their contribution and impact is seen and appreciated.

Strategic Aim 2

Experiences

To identify, pilot and develop new collaborative and sustainable volunteering models to support survivors and contribute to creating a cohesive society, social change, awareness-raising and a better response to survivors of abuse.

- ♦ Explore potential key external stakeholders with whom to develop partnerships.
- ♦ Develop a vibrant and connected women's culture, in which women empower women through better integrating volunteer and core services.
- ♦ Trial and pilot new, flexible ways of involving the diverse communities we serve through new roles and projects, including awareness-raising, fundraising, events and campaigning.

Strategic Aim 3

Managed growth



Our focus is on *getting growth right*: for volunteers, for service users, for staff, and for the women and girls in our wider community.



Closing remarks

As an organisation, we are excited to be entering this period of growth in our volunteering services. We know that, done correctly, volunteering can transform lives and communities. That is why, although we are expanding, our focus is on getting growth right: for volunteers, for service users, for staff, and for the women and girls in our wider community.

With this strategy, we commit to ensuring appropriate infrastructure within which to grow the volunteering offering, and within which volunteering is flexible based on volunteer and organisational need. Volunteers are placed in roles that suit them or which are developed in collaboration and co-production with those who will carry out the work.

We commit to supporting volunteers to develop their confidence, skills and networks alongside

survivors. Confident, well-supported volunteers are empowered by volunteering, and they support the empowerment of survivors and women in the community.

Lastly, we commit to exploring and innovating as we grow, engaging with the world, and putting ourselves at the forefront of best practice. We will work hard to encourage diverse voices and lives in our volunteering practice as we work to support survivors and to end violence against women for good.

To support these commitments and the implementation of the strategy, we are creating a yearly Action Plan, which will provide concrete steps to take the strategy forward, measure its impact, and provide milestones against which we can review its progress. The strategy will next be reviewed in March 2021.

