



# **'Healthy Alternatives' Social Prescribing Service**

## **1:1 Mentor Volunteer Role Description**

### **About The Southmead Development Trust**

The Southmead Development Trust exists to serve the community of Southmead and primarily does this by running the Southmead Youth Centre and a large centre called The Greenway Centre. The centre shares the site with a GP surgery and we see ourselves as a healthy living centre, social enterprise hub and community centre.

The Southmead Development Trust has a board of dedicated trustees that shape the vision and how it works towards serving Southmead.

The Vision for Southmead Development Trust is to be regarded and valued as the leading catalyst for improving and enhancing opportunities within the local community. As a healthy living centre we have a number of partnerships and projects to support health and wellbeing.

We aim to be an equal opportunities organisation and welcome applications from all sectors of the community. The Greenway Centre is fully accessible for disabled people.

### **About 'Healthy Alternatives'**

'Healthy Alternatives' is a social prescribing model which enables residents of Southmead to access social or community activities and resources within the local area. We work alongside local GP surgeries to help patients address the social and practical issues that may have affected their health (isolation, debt, employment, depression, family etc.). It includes supporting people to:

- Take the first steps to starting a new hobby or activity
- Join a new group or class
- Access and take up support offered by a community organisation
- Address practical support needs relating to debt, housing etc.
- Develop confidence and improve self-esteem
- Make contact with other people

We strive to empower residents and equip them with increased confidence and opportunities to take control of their own health and wellbeing, promote non-medical sources of support within the community, offer increased choices including a supported pathway for their own self-care and strengthen the relationship between primary care and the VCSE.

### **What is the role of a mentor within 'Healthy Alternatives'?**

Supervised by the service co-ordinator, volunteers will provide practical and emotional support to service users helping them to follow through on goals outlined in their action plan (put together with yourself after referral into the service).

Mentors will support clients on their whole journey – from the initial contact after being referred by their GP, meeting with them on a 1:1 basis to identify needs and provide emotional support, and providing practical support to enable them to access relevant services, groups and activities.

After an initial assessment with a referred individual, the mentor will meet with them for a further 3-5 sessions (usually once a week). These sessions are mainly activity-led and focused on practical, short-term goals. This may involve attending groups or activities with service users or helping them to overcome practical barriers (for example, anxiety around using public transport). However there will also be a need for mentors to simply meet a client for a cup of tea and a chat if they are feeling particularly lonely or isolated, or to work with them on emotional concerns before they feel ready to access community groups or activities. The mentor will help their mentee to raise their self-esteem and aspirations, along with enabling them to access different services who can help them longer-term, should the need be such.

This role involves intensive 1:1 work with clients, which often involves disclosures of an upsetting and challenging nature. Full training and support will be given to help with this, however it is advised that potential volunteers feel comfortable with this challenging nature of the role and feel equipped to cope with it. If it is felt by the volunteer or service coordinator that the role is not appropriate for the volunteer, there are a variety of other roles within the organisation that can be discussed.

#### **What will mentors be asked to do?**

- Follow up referrals to the service received from GP's and other referrers by contacting the individual by telephone to book an initial assessment
- Complete initial assessment of client in person
- Carry out research to find relevant opportunities, services, groups, activities etc
- Provide emotional support to clients
- Encourage and motivate clients to take up new activities
- Maintain client confidentiality at all times
- Keep accurate and factual case records
- Keep project coordinator updated on any issues or concerns which may arise
- Attend regular supervision meetings
- Attend regular training sessions

#### **What skills, experience and qualities are we looking for in a mentor?**

Someone who is:

- Able to encourage and motivate clients
- Able to support all kinds of people, many of whom may be very vulnerable
- Caring, sympathetic, sensitive and non-judgemental
- The ability to communicate effectively, using verbal, written and telephone communication methods
- Ability to develop and maintain constructive relationships which value individuals' strengths and knowledge
- Excellent listening skills helping to empower service users
- Awareness of the needs of people who are socially isolated, depressed, bereaved, and who may regard accessing new groups as intimidating
- Comfortable working on their own but also know when to seek support
- Able to contribute to recording of data for evaluation purposes
- Able to carry out research using a range of methods (or a willingness to learn)
- Able to maintain professional boundaries and maintain client confidentiality
- Reliable

### **How much time will mentors need to give?**

Mentors will be asked to commit to a minimum of 3 hours per week for a period of 6 months, after which time a reference will be provided if requested.

Mentors may also find that they wish to give additional time in the form of facilitating groups, doing research, building networks, attending events, helping with evaluation or general administrative tasks.

### **What could I get from being a mentor?**

Volunteering for Healthy Alternatives will give you the opportunity to:

- Learn new skills or develop existing skills
- Meet new people
- Be part of a team
- Gain experience in the health and social care field to boost your CV
- Actively support someone to improve their wellbeing
- Make a real difference to someone's life

### **How will I be supported?**

Group facilitators will be able to attend a 2-day training course of in-house training which, as well as introducing social prescribing, will cover areas such as mental health awareness, maintaining professional boundaries, active listening and safeguarding. This will be supplemented by monthly training throughout the volunteering experience. All training will be provided free of charge.

Group facilitators will then attend a half-day induction followed by shadowing the service coordinator for as long as both parties feel is necessary before contacting and supporting clients by themselves.

Ongoing support and supervision will be offered by the service coordinator and volunteer coordinator who will both be in regular contact with you throughout your volunteering.

Agreed out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.