

Policy on Volunteer Leadership and Group Structures

1. Purpose of the policy

- 1.1 To provide a framework by which volunteers may contribute to GMFA and participate in it's interventions.
- 1.2 To provide minimum standards for the formation and running of groups within GMFA.
- 1.3 To provide a clear, commonly understood definition of volunteer leadership.

2. Principles

- 2.1 GMFA is a community based organisation and welcomes both gay and non gay volunteers who support GMFA's Mission and Vision.
- 2.2 GMFA's vision and mission statements are:
 - Vision GMFA wants a gay community where individuals are able to make informed choices about their health, and a society that embraces equality and respects the right of people to make informed choices.
 - Mission Improving gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives.
- 2.3 The Board of Directors believes that health promotion for gay men is fundamentally enhanced when community members collectively have a crucial role in the development and delivery of interventions. Consequently GMFA and its work is structured to maximise the contribution of volunteers to its interventions.
- 2.4 In order to meet the mission of GMFA, GMFA requires that all volunteers work within a group structure. This can be either a group to deliver health interventions, the Board of Directors or a subcommittee. As GMFA uses different methods to educate and empower gay men, it is not possible to define one structure that all groups and subcommittees within GMFA must follow. Moreover, the different roles within groups vary, some of which require specific skills and a minimum commitment, whilst others do not. Therefore the Board of Directors wish to give as much freedom as possible for groups to arrange themselves as they believe most productive.
- 2.5 The Board of Directors also desire GMFA to be an open access organisation. However the Board recognises that not all volunteers have the same abilities and commitment. Therefore some volunteer roles within GMFA can only be filled by volunteers with relevant abilities and commitment.

- 2.6 Both the structure and management of groups and the allocation and election to roles within a group should not contravene any GMFA policy and specifically GMFA's Equality Statement.

3. Volunteer leadership

- 3.1 Volunteer leadership is a term that GMFA uses to mean the method by which GMFA volunteers collectively impact on the decisions made within GMFA.
- 3.2 Volunteer leadership is a way of working that enables volunteers: through the Board of Directors to control the strategy and policies of GMFA; and collectively, to make a crucial contribution to the development of interventions in order to meet the objects of the charity.
- 3.3 The objects of the charity are:
- (a) To protect and preserve public health in particular amongst the gay male population of the United Kingdom.
 - (b) To advance public education in the subjects affecting the health of gay men including the causes, symptoms, treatment and prevention of illness in particular through the promotion of research and the dissemination of the useful results of research.
- 3.4 The first, and most prevalent, route by which volunteers impact on the decisions made within GMFA is (in conjunction with employees) through the enactment of GMFA's strategy in developing interventions that contribute to GMFA's Vision and Mission. Most interventions are developed through a group structure using the Developing Interventions Policy.
- 3.5 The second route by which volunteers impact on the decisions within GMFA, is through the election of GMFA members (volunteers who have volunteered for six months or more) onto the Board of Directors.
- 3.6 The Board of Directors decides the strategy for GMFA and the policies that people within GMFA (both employees and volunteers) must adhere to. The Board of Directors also employs and empowers a Chief Executive and other members of staff to manage and enact strategy on behalf of the Board on a day to day basis.
- 3.7 The Board further enables volunteers to impact upon policies by electing volunteers to contribute to sub committees of the Board of Directors, creating clear pathways for volunteers to report any problems they perceive with GMFA's policies (see the Policy for Reporting Problems) and consulting with volunteers over some specific issues in order to gauge opinion.
- 3.8 Volunteer leadership does not mean that any volunteer (either by him/herself or with other volunteers) can unilaterally decide on policies, strategy and the development of interventions, nor does it imply a position of authority or that any conduct is acceptable by the virtue of being a volunteer.

4. Group Structures

- 4.1 A group is a set of people consisting of volunteers and employees that puts into practice, parts of GMFA's strategy.
- 4.2 All GMFA volunteers have the right to be a member of any group.
- 4.3 A member of a group is anyone who is a GMFA volunteer and has either attended the group's meetings or volunteered for the group, within the last year. The Project Manager is also a member of the group.
- 4.4 All members of a group will have equal voting rights on decisions made at a group, except for the Chair of a meeting, who will have an additional vote should there be any split decisions.
- 4.5 Most groups within GMFA are formed on an ongoing basis. However some groups are formed for a finite time period or to develop a specific intervention. Only the Board of Directors have authority to establish groups.
- 4.6 Groups may develop guidelines or codes of conduct for their own group where needed for operational reasons. These must not contradict other GMFA policies and must be approved by the Board of Directors.
- 4.7 All groups within GMFA must have an employed Project Manager. The role of the Project Manager in the group is set out in the Project Manager's Job Profile. This role is different for each group. However all Project Managers will be responsible for: co-ordinating volunteers; inducting new members of the group; supporting volunteers and (when available) organise the training of volunteers; plan agendas (with other members of the group if someone within that group has that function); arrange and minute meetings and team building and to be the budget holder and make purchases for the group.

5. Roles within a group

- 5.1 By a majority decision at a group meeting (which may include proxy votes) a group may set up specific roles (in addition to the Project Manager) within the group providing that:
 - 5.1.1 A role description for the role is written (see appendix1).
 - 5.1.2 The role description is approved by the Chief Executive.
- 5.2 The role of the Chief Executive in approving Volunteer Role Descriptions is to ensure that any volunteer role description does not contravene any GMFA policies in either word or spirit.
- 5.3 If the role is to preclude any GMFA volunteers from taking up a position within that role because of experience required or number of places available, then the Volunteer Role Description must clearly and unambiguously state the criteria on which volunteers will be assessed under the section "Experience and Requirements".
- 5.4 GMFA may offer training to enable volunteers to take up roles which require specific skills, but is under no obligation to do so.

- 5.5 The Project Manager will be responsible for making any assessments of criteria (with other members of the group if someone within that group has that assessment function).
- 5.6 When a role has a limited number of positions (eg a group decides that it needs two people to help co-ordinate its projects), volunteers must be elected by the group to those roles on an annual basis.
- 5.7 Project Managers may not occupy any additional roles within a group if the role has a limited number of positions.
- 5.8 No contract of employment with GMFA will be implied through taking on any voluntary roles within GMFA.

6. Election to roles within a group

- 6.1 Notification of an election, along with the Volunteer role description will be sent to all members of the group. The notification will request that anyone wishing to stand for the role submit an election statement (see appendix 2).
- 6.2 Volunteers must have at least three weeks (from the date the notification was sent) to return their statement.
- 6.3 The election statements will be sent to group members at least two weeks before an election.
- 6.4 The election will be held at a group meeting.
- 6.5 Any proxy votes must be sent to the person holding the proxy in writing (this includes email).
- 6.6 If there is only one candidate for a role, that person will automatically be elected without the need to hold a ballot of the group members.
- 6.7 One year after a volunteer has been elected to a role within a group, that volunteer must stand for re-election or allow another member of the group to be elected.
- 6.8 The maximum time limit allowed for organising and holding an election will be three months. The person currently occupying a role shall remain authorised to act in that role until the outcome of the election.

7. Subcommittees

- 7.1 All groups may form subcommittees to either manage the group or to develop interventions providing that:
 - 7.1.1 Terms of reference are developed (see appendix 3).
 - 7.1.2 The terms of reference are approved by the Chief Executive.
- 7.2 The role of the Chief Executive in approving the terms of reference is to ensure that any terms of reference does not contravene any GMFA policies in either word or spirit.
- 7.3 Subcommittees should make regular reports at group meetings.

7.4 Any decisions by a subcommittee that impact on a group or the interventions of a group, must be voted on by the group.

8. Group meetings

- 8.1 All group and subcommittee meetings should be held in public places unless explicit permission is gained from everyone who is eligible to attend those meetings. This is to ensure that all volunteers eligible to attend the meeting have access to the meeting, and that meetings are held in spaces that do not create a power imbalance between the people attending the meeting.
- 8.2 Venues for meetings should, as far as possible, have access for people with disabilities. Unfortunately GMFA does not have the resources to provide signing or other interpretation services at meetings.
- 8.3 Group and subcommittee meetings should normally be held on Monday to Thursday unless explicit permission to hold a meeting on another day is gained from everyone who is eligible to attend those meetings or there is a valid reason for holding the meeting on another day.
- 8.4 Notification of a meeting will normally be sent two weeks before a meeting. There is no obligation to notify people of meetings held on a regular pattern (eg. the first Monday of every month) or through other forms of communication. Meetings held at shorter notice are permissible providing that additional methods of notification have been used.

9. Challenging decisions

- 9.1 Any decisions by the Chief Executive or the Project Manager and volunteers (with regard to assessment of criteria) may be made using the Volunteer Reporting Problems Policy.
- 9.2 Any alleged misconduct will be investigated using the Employee or Volunteer Disciplinary Policies.

10. Dissemination of policy

- 10.1 This policy will go to all staff and volunteers and be included in any staff and volunteer induction.

11. Review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed every four years.
- 11.2 This policy was passed on 24/03/04.
- 11.3 This policy was reviewed and amended on 27/02/08.

Appendix 1

Volunteer Role description *Type the Role title here*

GMFA's vision and mission statement:

Vision – GMFA wants a gay community where individuals are able to make informed choices about their health, and a society that embraces equality and respects the right of people to make informed choices.

Mission – GMFA will educate, empower and equip gay men to make informed choices, and create an environment that supports personal choice. We will do this by harnessing the skills, knowledge and experience of the gay community.

Role

Give an overview as to how this role contributes to GMFA's Mission and Vision

Specific responsibilities

Specifically state the duties and activities covered by this role.

Experience and Requirements

If the role is not available to all volunteers, what requirements are needed to fulfil the role? Make sure that any requirements are genuine requirements rather than unnecessary obstacles that do disadvantage individuals or groups of volunteers.

Commitment required

What is the minimum commitment required and the typical hours for volunteering?

Authority

Does the position enable people to make decisions without reference to anyone else? If so what are they?

Benefits

Does this role have any specific benefits?

Potential Frustrations

What parts of this role may cause difficulties?

Potential Satisfactions

What parts of this role may be personally rewarding to a volunteer?

Appendix 2

Group Name <i>{Title of role}</i> Election Statement
Name
Election Statement Please say why you believe members of your group should elect you to the above role. List your relevant experience in relation to the Volunteer Role Description, including anything you may have done for GMFA in a similar capacity. Indicate what motivated you to apply for the role. If there is something specific you want to achieve in the role, mention it. Use up to 400 words maximum.

Appendix 3

Terms of Reference for *Type the Subcommittee name*

Membership

If the subcommittee is not open to all volunteers, what requirements are needed to fulfil the role? Make sure that any requirements are genuine requirements rather than unnecessary obstacles that do disadvantage individuals or groups of volunteers.

Purpose

*What has the subcommittee been set up to do?
Specifically state the duties covered by this subcommittee.*

Delegated authority

What executive powers does the subcommittee have?

Frequency

How often will the subcommittee meet?

Duration

How long will the subcommittee be set up for?

Chair

Is the subcommittee going to have a Chair or someone responsible for reporting?

Reporting Procedure

To whom and how will the group report?

Quorum

How many people need to be present at a meeting to make the decisions valid?

Date of disbandment

When will the subcommittee finish its work?