



“I like having chats with my volunteer – they always listen.”

## Independent Visitor Recruitment Pack

you.plus  
**Sova**

## Volunteering with Sova

### What we do

Sova is a national charity which helps people to steer clear of crime and make better choices. We do this by working directly with those in trouble because of crime, drugs, unemployment, isolation or lack of skills.

Our experience has shown us that for people to see new possibilities for themselves, they need to believe they can make good decisions. They need their family and friends. They need financial stability and the chance to work. They need a home. Quite simply, they need a second chance. Whether it's about finding a job or friends, understanding how to manage money or discovering new prospects, we help people change their lives for the better.

We believe that stronger communities are built by looking out for those who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to access the opportunities available – looking out for people who are often sidelined by society.

Our goal is to change this by working to give people a fair chance at changing their lives for the better.

With more than **140** staff and **850** volunteers, we deliver **more than 40** projects across England and Wales, working with some of the most disadvantaged people in society. During 2014/15, Sova supported more than **8,000** people, providing a range of services, including:

- Mentoring offenders
- Drug and alcohol support
- Helping people back into training and work
- Supporting children, young people and families
- Helping people improve their skills

### Our volunteers

Our volunteers use their skills, experience and passion to make a difference in changing people's lives for the better. They give their time to help

people who find themselves in difficult situations. In a single year, Sova volunteers typically commit to the equivalent of **11,524** working days to support, befriend and mentor people, offering them practical help, advice and guidance, as well as friendship and understanding.

### Our history

Sova has been working to help improve and transform lives since 1975 when the organisation was formed by a group of volunteers working at the Inner London Probation Service. In 1982, Sova began working with social services to recruit, train and deploy volunteers to offer support and advice to people in their local communities.

### Our Commitment to Safeguarding

We are committed to promoting the welfare of and safeguarding of children, young people and adults who are at risk.

Sova is alert to the fact that many of our service users have increased levels of vulnerability, and we deliver all aspects of our operations – including our recruitment of volunteers – in response to this.

### Sova Independent Visitors

**The Children's Act of 1989** introduced the role of Independent Visitors (IVs) for looked after children; their task is "visiting, advising and befriending the child"

Looked after children are often at risk of social isolation, low educational achievement and can often face instability and uncertainty.

The role of the IV is to provide an adult who is separate from the professionals involved in the life of a looked after child, providing friendship, emotional support, someone to talk to and have fun with. The IV meets regularly (usually once a month) with their young person, developing a stable and enduring relationship.

**For further information, please go to**  
[www.sova.org.uk](http://www.sova.org.uk)

## Independent Visitor

### Role description

#### Project Base: Nottingham Independent Visitor Service

#### Context of role

The role of a Sova Independent Visitor is to build a healthy and child focused relationship with a young person who is in the care of the local authority; aiming to support them to grow in confidence, feel valued and thrive in their lives. IVs are usually matched to a young person according to a variety of considerations such as interests and hobbies. The IV will be fully trained for the role and will be supported throughout. The Sova team will make a match with a young person and organize an initial meeting where they can meet their young person, talk about themselves, plan what they would like to do and agree on when they would like to meet. The role has an element of responsibility to report regularly on all meetings and contact as outlined by the project.

More details are available in the Key Responsibilities section about the types of activities required to carry out the role of an IV. Additionally, the Training section outlines what training is provided to IVs to support them in carrying out their role.

#### Equality and diversity

At Sova we strive to reflect the people and communities we exist to support in the make-up of our staff and volunteer teams. The benefits to Sova of diversity are clear. By recruiting our staff and volunteers from the widest possible pool we believe we will find the most talented people, who are best placed to understand and empathise with the people we support.

Sova is determined to lead by example. All of our staff and volunteers will be given an equal chance to develop and progress and enjoy equal treatment and reward.

#### Volunteers with a criminal record

At Sova we actively promote equality of opportunity for everyone. We welcome applications for volunteering opportunities from a wide range of people, including those with criminal records. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working as a Sova volunteer. It will depend on the nature of the volunteering role and the nature of your offences. However those applying to be a volunteer will be expected to disclose fully any previous criminal convictions and be prepared to have a DBS check before becoming an active volunteer.

Please note: An individual who is on a DBS barring list will not be able to volunteer for Sova. Being DBS barred means an individual cannot work with children or vulnerable adults, and it is a criminal offence for an individual to attempt to do so. Sova would also be breaking the law if we recruit someone who is DBS barred.

Prospective volunteers will be asked about any criminal convictions they may have during 1st Interview. We will also ask prospective volunteers if they are on a DBS barred list at this stage.

#### Other factors

Additional restrictions on volunteer recruitment may apply on a project-by project basis

**[If these are known, please specify here]**

### Key responsibilities/activities for an Independent Visitor

- Meet with their young person, as directed by the project, (with project staff and or/any referring agency)
- Create a positive relationship between themselves and the young person
- Contribute to the young person's development and confidence
- Assist and advise the young person in developing skills and appropriate attitudes that will assist them in achieving the goals in their life
- Encourage and motivate the young person to make positive changes and encourage their personal development (In liaison with the project, the referring agency and the young person concerned)
- Encourage young people to make positive use of local resources and activities, such as local parks and leisure centres
- Maintain principles of confidentiality, especially in relation to the young person, the project and any referring agency
- Operate at all times within the Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Equal Opportunities policies of Sova and any relevant referring agency
- Complete all paperwork and attend supervision meetings as directed by the project
- Attend young people's reviews as required
- Participate in providing feedback to SPACE <sup>1</sup>(Sova participation and continuing engagement)
- Willingness to attend additional training

### Training

As part of the selection and recruitment process individuals are required to undertake the training so as to enable them to carry out the roles as described above.

Mandatory training for this role includes:

- Core Volunteering Skills (Sova005)
- Safeguarding (Sova002)

Learning achieved through completing this training can accredited through Certa (OCN) and Agored (Welsh projects only). Prospective volunteers will be able to discuss accreditation with their project manager.

Ongoing training and support is provided regularly to volunteer to provide opportunities for development.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some regions have regular SPACE forums where active volunteers meet regularly with project staff. These forums allow volunteers to input into the review of our Volunteer Policy, Procedures and Practices.

## Selection Criteria

As part of the recruitment process prospective volunteers will be assessed against a number of criteria, which help to determine suitability for a particular role. These criteria will be assessed at various stages of the recruitment process, including application form, 1<sup>st</sup> interview, training and 2<sup>nd</sup> interview.

Individuals applying to become a Sova Independent Visitor will be required to demonstrate ability in the following areas:

- Attributes
  - Understanding the role of volunteers
  - Reliability and commitment
  - Honesty
  - Declaration of criminal record
  - Ability to hold confidential information
- Personal approach
  - Motivation to volunteer
  - Self awareness
  - Ability to accept failure
  - Ability to give support
  - Confidence and ability to deal with difficult situations
  - Understanding personal boundaries
- Attitudes
  - Perceptions, assumptions and attitudes regarding looked after children
  - Ability to work in a non-discriminatory way
  - Respect for other people's point of view
- Communication
  - Effective listener
  - Appropriate non-verbal communication
  - Adequate verbal communication
  - Perceptive

## Recruitment process

The recruitment process in becoming a Sova volunteer involves:

- Application
- Short listing
- 1<sup>st</sup> Interview
- Training
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview
- Satisfactory DBS disclosure
- Satisfactory references
- Volunteer registration process
- ID Card Issued