for your interest in volunteering with OTR (Off the Record Bristol). This document has been put together to explain how our Volunteer Therapist role works and to answer any questions you might have. If there is something you would like answered that is not covered in this document please email our Volunteer Coordinator, Max at: max@otrbristol.org.uk

Our 1:1 Therapies service has been part of OTR since it started over 55 years ago. The support of Volunteer Therapists has been crucial to our service. We offer free short term (six sessions plus assessment session) therapy to young people in Bristol and South Gloucestershire aged 11 to 18.

In keeping with the OTR’s values, we are a free and inclusive mixed modality service that prides itself on being a place where therapists at any stage of their careers, working in any modality can share ideas and develop their practice.

We strive to work in new and innovative ways, such as using new online software in our sessions (“Pro Real”) or utilising new settings for sessions such as outdoor therapies (“Nature Works”)..

All our volunteers receive a full induction to our organisation as well as tailored support in their professional development and the opportunity to be part of an innovative and exciting service. Our volunteers also take part in internal and external specialist training for both staff and volunteers. There are opportunities for our therapists to share their own skills and approaches within our Skill-Sharing Development Days. We also run a monthly anti-oppressive reflective practice, where staff and volunteers are able to learn about working with marginalised groups and how they can better serve people from those communities through their practice.

**Do I need a professional counselling qualification or need to be in training to be a volunteer therapist?**

Yes, OTR requires that all our Volunteer Therapists either hold a BACP or equivalent professional body recognised qualification and membership or are actively in training working towards such qualification. Therapists in training must have been cleared by their training body as being ready to see clients as a trainee. OTR will not consider applications from applicants that do not meet these criteria.

**Should I consult with my training organisation that**

**Welcome to OTR!**

Thank you so much **placement hours with OTR will be recognised before applying ?**

Yes, OTR recommends that any trainee therapist looking to get their placement hours by volunteering with OTR check that their training body will count any hours spent volunteering OTR towards their training. This is due to the fact that some training bodies will only recognise time spent working with over 18 towards a trainee’s placement hours. OTR recommended that you check that this is the case before applying.

**Do I decide how many clients I will see?**

Our volunteers need to be willing to see at least three clients a week. This can be face to face or online. However, we understand the need for flexibility from us in order to accommodate the needs of our volunteers. Therefore, all new volunteers will be allowed to build up their caseload from one to three clients at a rate they feel comfortable with. Volunteers will also have regular line management meetings where there will be a chance to review the volunteer's workload and be able to adjust to accommodate the needs of our volunteers as well as the needs of the service.

**How much of my time will I be expected to give?**

Each session with a client lasts 50 minutes. Aside from the time commitment of the sessions and note taking, volunteers will be required to attend a fortnightly two-hour group clinical supervision. There is also a mandatory induction day as well as quarterly one-hour long line management meetings that you will be required to attend.

**I am only free on certain days, will this be a barrier to volunteering with OTR?**

Due to our limited resources, OTR is only able to offer volunteering hours on days where we have availability - this is due to space and staffing requirements. Any availability that OTR has for new volunteers will be sent out as part of the application pack upon request.

Here is what our current shift session patterns are:

Weekday mornings: 09:00-10:00, 10:20- 11:10 13:45-14:30

Weekday afternoon: 15:00-15:50, 16:10-17:00, 17:20-18:10, 18:30-19:20

Saturday mornings: 09:30-09:20, 10:40-11:30, 11:50-12:40, 13:10-14:00

Please note that most of our need is for after school sessions i.e., from 3pm onwards or on weekends. Availability during those times would be particularly appreciated. We also are only able to offer sessions during working hours on Fridays.

**Will clinical supervision be provided by OTR?**

Yes, as a requirement of your role as a volunteer therapist with OTR, you will be expected to attend a fortnightly group supervision which will be in keeping with BACP guidelines. Our supervision groups are mixed modality groups and consist of both paid OTR therapists and volunteers. Each group consists of three therapists and a supervisor.

Please note there is limited flexibility regarding times for supervision groups, so if you are unable to attend supervision at the given times it may no longer be possible for you to see OTR clients.

**Where are the sessions based?**

Sessions can be held either online remotely or in person, we have two buildings:

Bristol base - 8-10 West St, Old Market St, Bristol BS2 0BH (parking is limited however we provide parking permits for our volunteers)

South Gloucestershire base - Armadillo Youth, Station Road, Yate BS37 4FW (free parking)

North Somerset base - The Barn, Great Western Rd, Clevedon BS21 6HB

**Will working in person with young people be safe given the COVID situation?**

We prioritise the safety of our staff and volunteers as well as the young people we work with. Therefore, we take measures in line with government guidelines to ensure that there is safe social distancing. A complete covid risk assessment of COVID safety measures is available for all members of the public to view upon request..

**How are young people allocated to therapists?**

All our young people are allocated therapists on a first-come, first-served basis. However, all self-referrals are allowed to state a preference on the gender of the therapist they work with.

**What is OTR doing to support volunteers from marginalised groups?**

At OTR we believe that our team should reflect the wide range of communities the young people we support come from. To that end we strive to create a diverse and inclusive workplace where staff and volunteers from all backgrounds and communities are represented and able to thrive in their roles.

To that end we have established our “Race and Equalities Working Group” which open to staff and volunteers from across OTR to have their voices heard and take action to develop a more inclusive, working environment within OTR

OTR Puts on regular interval training around working with people from marginalised groups this allow us to make sure that every member of the team has a good level of awareness around the issues facing different communities and understands the importance of continuous development in this area

OTR has signed the ‘Halo’ hair code that explicitly protects employees who come to work with natural hair and protective hairstyles associated with their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

Our Old Market location has ground floor wheelchair access as well as disabled toilet facilities and wheelchair lift platform on the ground floor. OTR is fully committed to creating a culture in which diversity and equality of opportunity are promoted actively and in which unlawful discrimination - direct or indirect - is not tolerated.

**Will volunteering at OTR lead to me being given a paid role?**

Volunteering with OTR does not guarantee a paid role within our organisation. We do inform all of our volunteers if a paid therapeutic role becomes available, and welcome applications from our volunteers. These applications however are treated no differently in the recruitment process to those coming from outside the organisation. What is the mandatory training needed for me to volunteer with off the record?

All our volunteers are expected to attend an induction day; the dates for this will be sent out along with application packs. Inability to attend induction training will prohibit an applicant starting with us.

Volunteers will also be expected to complete an online NSPCC child protection course, this can be completed at home and consists of 6 45-minute sessions.

There are occasionally other mandatory training as well as opportunities for other optional training. We try to offer a range of times to ensure flexibility for all staff and volunteers.

**Will I receive clinical supervision as part of my volunteering?**

We offer 2 and a half hours of fortnightly group supervision for every 4 clients that is on a volunteer case load. These groups are mixed modality groups and attendance to them is mandatory as part of your role as a volunteer therapist.

We ask that all our applicants mention any further supervision requirements they might have as part of their training during the recruitment process

**Who do I contact if I feel my client is at risk?**

At OTR is always a member of staff onsite to advise our volunteers on how best to report and record any possible risk that may be disclosed. There is also an out of hours safeguard where concerns about risk can be reported and worked through.