

Peer Support Volunteer Recruitment FAQs

1. What kind of support can I expect when I'm volunteering?

You will never be expected to facilitate a session alone. Every session is co-facilitated alongside a SARSAS staff member and includes dedicated time before and after the session to prepare together, reflect on how the session went, and discuss any support needs. You will receive ongoing guidance, supervision and support from the Group Work Coordinator throughout your volunteering to help you feel confident, safe and valued in your role. We have Reflective Practice sessions which are run online in small groups with a specially trained supervisor to help you reflect on your experiences alongside other volunteers. You will also be part of a team of lovely volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

2. I have personal experience of sexual violence and/or abuse. Can I still volunteer?

We welcome volunteers with lived experience, recognising that this can bring valuable empathy, understanding and hope when supporting people affected by sexual violence and abuse.

If you have previously used SARSAS services, we ask that you wait at least six months after finishing your support before applying to volunteer. This is to help ensure you have had time to focus on your own wellbeing before taking on a peer support role.

As part of the informal interview, we will talk with all applicants about any potential triggers, boundaries and support needs. We will continue to provide support throughout your training, induction and ongoing volunteering.

There is never any expectation to share your personal experiences. We encourage everyone to contribute in ways that feel safe, comfortable and authentic for them.

3. Why and when might someone use our Drop-in and Peer Support spaces?

As a Peer Support Volunteer, you may support one or more of the following sessions, depending on your interests, availability and the needs of the service.

Reach Out

Someone might come to a Reach Out session as a first step towards seeking support. They may not recognise that what they have experienced was sexual violence or abuse, or they may not know that support is available.

They may also be part of a community that is less likely to access support or be facing barriers that make it harder to reach services, such as a lack of trust in organisations, unstable housing, poor mental health, language barriers, or other challenges.

Reach Out is a low-pressure, accessible support space held within local communities. It is designed to meet people where they are, allowing them to engage in whatever way feels right for them. Some people may take away information and leave, while others may have a private conversation, ask for support to refer themselves to SARSAS, or take part in a simple grounding or creative activity.

Drop-In Sessions

Someone might attend a Drop-In Session while they are waiting to access structured support with SARSAS. Waiting for support can feel isolating, and these sessions provide an opportunity to connect with others and access support in the meantime.

As part of our *Waiting Well* offer, Drop-In Sessions give participants the opportunity to meet members of the team, ask questions about our services, take part in a simple wellbeing activity—such as pebble painting—and share ideas for coping and self-care while they wait.

Peer Support Groups

Someone might join a Peer Support Group after they have completed one-to-one structured support with SARSAS and would like to continue their recovery alongside others with shared lived experience.

These groups are based on the belief that survivors know best what they need. They provide a safe, supportive space where people can build connections, learn from one another, explore topics linked to recovery, and continue their healing journey through mutual support and shared understanding.

4. Where is the training based?

In our offices in central Bristol.

5. Can I join the training remotely?

No. The training is just offered in-person in Bristol, as we feel that being face-to-face aids learning and a feeling of connection and community among volunteers.

6. Is volunteering just for women?

We support all genders throughout a lot of our services including the drop in spaces and peer support and so are inclusive of all genders as volunteers.

7. Do you offer volunteer expenses?

Volunteers can claim up to £20 per day of training and/or volunteering. This includes travel, parking and any required and agreed expenses. You will need to keep receipts or other proof of purchase and fill out an expenses form. We will sign off expenses and reimburse you as quickly as possible, usually within a couple of weeks.

8. What kind of commitment do I need to make?

To become a Peer Support Volunteer, you will first need to complete an application, attend an informal interview, and take part in all four days of training in Bristol. Following your training, you will be invited to shadow one of our drop-in sessions to help you decide whether the role feels like a good fit for you.

If you choose to continue, you will begin an induction period. During this time, you will attend one of our drop-in spaces, initially observing the sessions before gradually building up to supporting the SARSAS staff member to facilitate the space.

We ask all Peer Support Volunteers to commit to a minimum of 6 months of volunteering. This gives you time to settle into the role, build your confidence, and make the most of your training. This commitment could involve volunteering for around 4 hours each month at one of our Drop-In or Reach Out sessions, or around 4 hours every fortnight as part of our six-session Peer Support Group programme.