

Advice Space

Volunteer Policy

**1. Value statement**

Advice Space values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the local communities that we serve and bring a unique perspective on all our work.

Advice Space recognises volunteers as a core part of our team with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff.

**2. Status of Volunteers**

Advice Space is clear in its intent on volunteering and views volunteering as enhancing and complementing existing structures.

**3. Beneficial Experience**

Advice Space benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers. We believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience too. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met.

**4. Equality and Diversity**

Advice Space strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation within a diverse and inclusive community. We are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers which is reflected in all our policies and practices.

**5. Expansion of our work**

Our work can be extended because of the wealth of skill and experience that is brought to the organisation through our volunteers. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement the roles of paid staff.

**6. Industrial Dispute**

Volunteers will not be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular tasks, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.

## **7. Volunteer Roles**

All volunteers are provided with a written role description, outlining the purpose, tasks and main expectations of their role. This role is reviewed at least once a year with the volunteer's supervisor

## **8. Out of Pocket Expenses**

Advice Space reimburses volunteers' out of pocket expenses for travel and lunch when claims are submitted on a standard Expenses Claim Form and accompanied by proof of expenditure. Details are contained within the Volunteer Handbook.

## **9. Resources**

Advice Space endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles.

## **10. Day to Day Management**

The service manager is responsible for the overall management of volunteer involvement, including overseeing the implementation of this policy and dealing with any complaint relating to volunteers. The volunteer's designated supervisor provides support and supervision, identifies training requirements, countersigns expenses claims etc. All staff required to undertake such duties are provided with training in the management, supervision, support and training of volunteers.

## **11. Recruitment and Selection**

Advice Space is committed to serving and representing all the people of Belfast and wishes to see all sections of the community represented among our volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are widely promoted throughout Belfast, and we will endeavour to make recruitment and selection materials available in a format accessible to any individual or group, upon request. Furthermore, Advice Space regularly reviews the make-up of the volunteer team to identify and target any under-represented group(s).

Advice Space implements a fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers and treats all information collected in this process confidentially.

All potential volunteers will go through a recruitment and selection process that is appropriate to the role offered. Advice Space uses application forms, references and interviews. Additional measures may be implemented depending on the nature of the volunteer role and police records checks are conducted where appropriate. The process is conducted by appropriately briefed/trained staff and aims to allow both parties to give and

receive sufficient information to assess whether the volunteer opportunities available match the potential volunteer's skills, qualities and interests.

If unsuccessful, individuals will be offered an opportunity to discuss the outcome and identify possible alternatives within or outside Advice Space.

## **12. Management of Volunteers**

Volunteers are provided with a written letter of welcome, which outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both the volunteer and Advice Space. This agreement may be reviewed at any time with the consent of the volunteer and his/her supervisor, including during the initial review meeting at the end of the settling in period.

All volunteers are provided with an induction within six weeks of commencing their voluntary work. The induction: provides background information on Advice Space; explains its structures and procedures; describes the volunteer role and the work team and outlines how s/he will be supported, including practical information on e.g. expenses. During the induction period volunteers will be provided with written information on relevant legislation, organisational policies and codes of practice and will be given the opportunity to discuss any of the issues with the Director, Service Manager or supervisor.

All volunteer placements are subject to a settling in period, the length of which depends on the nature and hours of the voluntary work. During this period volunteers are given additional support and a review meeting between the volunteer and his/her supervisor is held at the end of the settling in period to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the arrangement.

All volunteers are allocated a named member of staff as their supervisor (although the Service Manager can also be contacted in case of an emergency or if the designated supervisor is unavailable). This individual can provide day-to-day help and guidance on any issue related to the voluntary work and is responsible for providing regular support to, and supervision of, the volunteer. The frequency, duration and format of this support and supervision is agreed between the volunteer and his/her supervisor at the end of the settling in period

Advice Space is committed to improving the effectiveness of volunteers. Volunteers may choose to attend any in-house training course that they feel is relevant to their voluntary work, subject to the approval of their supervisors and availability of places and cost. Volunteers may also apply to the Service Manager for financial and practical support to attend external courses, where they can be shown to have a clear relevance to the voluntary work. Volunteers attending approved training courses, internal or external, may do so within their normal hours of voluntary work and may reclaim out-of-pocket expenses.

Advice Space aims to reflect the voluntary nature of our relationship with volunteers in all policies and procedures for managing their involvement. In working together, paid staff understand and appreciate that given the relationship outlined above, volunteers are able to refuse any request or demand which they deem to be unrealistic or unreasonable.

In the event of minor complaint or grievance either about or made by the volunteer will be dealt with by the volunteer's designated supervisor through the usual support and supervision procedures, in the first instance. It is important to discuss with your supervisor, any demands that are unrealistic for you as a volunteer, so that this can be resolved.

However, we recognise our duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of all our stakeholders and therefore operate a formal complaints procedure in the case of more serious complaints. In the case of particularly serious offences, this process may be bypassed and/or the subject of the complaint asked to leave. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the matter will be handed over to the police

Advice Space recognises the core role that volunteers fulfil at every level of the organisation. It endeavours to communicate with volunteers in appropriate ways.

It also recognises the importance of seeking volunteers' ideas and opinions at regular intervals and conducts an annual volunteer survey. Feedback from volunteers is always welcome and any volunteer may make representations to the Director.

In order to effectively monitor the work that volunteers do and how they are managed, a personnel file is maintained for all volunteers, which includes: contact details and other relevant personal information; details of the application and selection process; agreements made; hours worked; records of support and supervision activities; training undertaken and any complaints made or received. Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and volunteers are entitled to inspect all such information pertaining to their own involvement."

Both volunteers and the organisation agree that the intellectual property rights of original work produced by volunteers automatically transfers to the organisation.