

ACE Cardiff Volunteering Policy

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Policy Due for Review on: 03.12.2022

Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in ACE Cardiff. It is of relevance to all within the organisation, including volunteers, staff, members, and those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility.

Commitment

ACE Cardiff recognises the right that people have to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering. It also acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique, and that volunteering can benefit users of services, staff, local communities, and the volunteers themselves. ACE Cardiff values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and which develop volunteering.

ACE Cardiff recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Definition

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship as well as an important component of democracy. Volunteers are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the community.

Statement of values and principles

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Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by ACE Cardiff and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers.

Volunteers will not be used during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, the organisation cannot be compelled to provide either regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

Volunteer Co-ordination

All volunteers will have a nominated member of staff or volunteer to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out tasks effectively. Volunteers will be informed of who to contact to receive support and supervision.

'Volunteer co-ordination' will be explicitly referred to in all relevant job descriptions within the organisation.

The nominated post holder with overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within the organisation is the Volunteer Manager. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers

Recruitment & Selection

ACE Cardiff is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion and political beliefs. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned will be disregarded by the organisation in terms of recruitment and selection.

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Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the organisation or referred to the nearest Volunteer Centre.

All volunteers will be asked to produce two references (one if under 18) and will be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if the position involves working with children at The Learning Club. They will also attend an informal interview (in person or online).

Volunteers will be permitted to attend in person ACE Cardiff learning sessions before their DBS certificate is received as they will be in the presence of and supervised by a supervisor/tutor and other DBS checked volunteers. However, the DBS certificate should be produced as soon as it is available and queries should made to the appropriate person if one is not produced (directed at the volunteer if the certificate has been issued by the DBS body, or the DBS body themselves if no certificate has been issued). If after 60 days no DBS certificate is produced for any reason, then the volunteer MUST cease their volunteer role until one can be.

Volunteers will have a clear and concise task description, which will be subsequently reviewed every year. The task description will be prepared in conjunction with the volunteer and the designated person referred to above.

New volunteers will be properly inducted into the organisation.

Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence.

Online Monitoring

In a response to the Coronavirus pandemic, ACE Cardiff introduced online learning sessions for the children in April 2020. These introduced potential new safeguarding risks as groups are now divided into "breakout rooms" (separate, virtual rooms) to allow for quieter and focused communication, something that previously would have taken place within the same room at our face-to-face sessions. With volunteers being left alone for periods of time, this introduces a potential safeguarding risk in the form of the volunteer possibly saying or acting inappropriately in the presence of the child while unmonitored. While this is a different risk to volunteers being left physically alone with children - as the child has the ability to remove themselves from the situation should risks arise - it should still be mitigated.

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As “online” volunteers may be hired without any face to face contact when this isn’t possible (such as during a lockdown), volunteers will be more closely monitored in their interactions within the session and as with in-person sessions, should not be left alone (in a virtual sense) with children until their DBS certificate is received.

It will be standard practice for tutors or a present staff member to “drop in” on these breakout rooms of all volunteers to check on progress. This can serve both to check on the success of the pairings but also from a safeguarding perspective to make the volunteers aware that they may be interrupted at any moment and therefore reduce the risk of any harmful activities taking place.

Training & Development

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all the organisation's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health & safety, child protection and equal opportunities.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the organisation in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the designated person referred to above to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend relevant training.

Training in the management of volunteers will be provided for those staff with direct responsibility for same.

Support, Supervision and Recognition

Volunteers will have a named person to whom they can take their volunteering concerns and seek guidance and support.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and the supervisor to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be negotiated between the volunteer and the designated officer referred to above.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation's wider staff, at staff meetings etc.

Volunteers will be recognised in a formal event at the end of each academic year, recognising their contribution to the charity's work.

Expenses

ACE Cardiff recognises that the reimbursement of expenses incurred in travelling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

The organisation's volunteers are able to claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure. Details of how much can be claimed can be found in the Volunteer Information Booklet.

The organisation has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses which are the same for volunteers, staff, etc. and are as approved by the Inland Revenue.

It is the responsibility of the designated person referred to above to make volunteers aware of the procedure for the reimbursement of expenses.

Insurance

The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

The organisation does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage

Confidentiality

The organisation will advise the volunteer on its confidentiality policy and procedures, where relevant. This would include those relating to personal information held by the organisation relating to the volunteer. For further information please see the GDPR Policy.

Settling Differences

The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The organisation seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences.

The designated officer referred to above is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct and these should be referred to them. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by the organisation to the volunteer while it endeavours to resolve the problem in

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an informal manner. If an informal resolution proves impossible, the organisation's wider disciplinary, grievance or complaints policies and procedures (which include volunteers) will be referred to. Any further information please refer to the Grievance Policy.

Rights and Responsibilities

The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- Have adequate support in their volunteering
- Receive appreciation
- Have safe working conditions
- Be insured
- Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- Receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- Receive appropriate training
- Be free from discrimination
- Be offered the opportunity for personal development

The organisation expects volunteers to:

- Be reliable
- Be honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Make the most of training and support opportunities
- Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation
- Work within agreed guidelines
- Respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- Comply with the organisation's policies.
- Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- Receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- Receive appropriate training
- Be free from discrimination
- Be offered the opportunity for personal development