



The Advantage Foundation Ltd.

Volunteering Policy

Purpose of this policy

The Volunteer Policy identifies and sets out the principles by which Advantage works with volunteers, the benefits it gains from its volunteers and benefits that volunteers expect to gain. This policy sets out the minimum standards for recruitment; induction and appointment of volunteers to ensure that both the volunteer's and Advantage's expectations are met. It provides for fair and equal treatment of its volunteers and a framework for implementation at national, country and regional level.

Who the policy applies to

The policy is for staff that work with, and provide support to, volunteers within Advantage and for volunteers themselves who provide this role as a part of their Advantage activities. It is useful for organisations and individuals with whom Advantage has partnership relationships. The policy will be provided to all Advantage volunteers.

Who are Advantage volunteers?

An Advantage volunteer is someone who freely chooses to give their time to undertake tasks and activities to help Advantage achieve its aims, without payment or the expectation of payment. The arrangement is voluntary on both sides. Either party can bring this to an end.

Broadly, Advantage recognises three main types of volunteer:

- i) Project - those involved in Advantage projects delivery and related face-to-face work with young people.
- ii) Office - those involved in office-based work supporting the front-line work of Advantage.
- iii) Role Models – those involved in representing Advantage through a wide range of opportunities, acting as role models and inspiring others through their personal experience of Advantage. This is a supported volunteer role for young people who have successfully completed an Advantage programme and are now in a positive outcome.

Advantage seeks and values the following attributes in our volunteers:

- care
- compassion
- competence
- communication

- courage
- commitment

Thereby adhering to Advantage's core values. Advantage is not able to accept applications from those who are not willing to commit to Advantage's aims and objectives or from those that Advantage considers to be unsuitable for the role.

Equality and Diversity

Advantage is committed to building a diverse organisation that is responsive to the needs of young people and our stakeholders. Advantage is also committed to equal opportunities at all stages of recruitment and selection. Short-listing, interviewing and selection of volunteers should always be carried out without discrimination: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

The value and benefits that volunteers bring to Advantage

Advantage recognises that volunteers can be an enormous resource in helping to meet its aims. Volunteers can bring a wealth of expertise, knowledge, experience and skills to Advantage. Specifically, volunteers can:

- help deliver face-to-face work with young people
- enrich the quality of programme delivery
- provide a unique and different relationship with young people that cannot be provided by paid staff
- provide contacts and networking opportunities that help promote and raise the profile of Advantage
- offer specialist knowledge in a variety of areas
- provide an interface between Advantage, the local community, funders, referrers and other partners upon whom Advantage relies

The benefits to a volunteer of supporting Advantage

Supporting Advantage provides volunteers with:

- the ability to make a difference to the lives of individual young people, and thereby making a contribution to society as a whole
- an opportunity to be part of a professional team in a well-respected organisation
- personal development opportunities and experiences
- networking opportunities and interaction with other volunteers, supporters and Advantage staff

Advantage principles of working with volunteers

Advantage has a number of defined principles and processes relating to a range of areas and aspects that underpin volunteer involvement in its activities. These are outlined below. The principles will ensure fair and equal treatment of all volunteers. Policies are provided centrally to give advice, support and guidance on all such issues, and assist in delivery. These will also be aimed at staff managing volunteers, volunteer coordinators as well as volunteers themselves.

Advantages Safeguarding Children & Young People and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Policies give clear procedures on responding to concerns regarding the safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Combined with the associated procedures, and guidance, the policies provide a

structure for staff and volunteers that may come across concerns of this nature within the context of their work.

Advantage requires the use of a declaration form to collect information on all prospective volunteers. Additionally, all volunteers will be interviewed to provide relevant information and explore their aspirations and the experience they can bring to Advantage. It is important for all involved to appreciate that the interview is not a competitive process, and the sole selection criteria is suitability for the role. Written references will be required and taken up to help confirm suitability for volunteering and for specific roles.

A DBS check is required for volunteers undertaking 'regulated activity'. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar someone from volunteering with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of their offence.

Volunteers will have a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes gained from their education, work, previous volunteering, and life experiences. However, to ensure that volunteers are appropriately equipped for their role each volunteer must undergo the appropriate induction and training process prior to appointment.

Only when the selection process, background checks and training have been completed fully, and it is agreed that the person is suitable for the role, can a volunteer be appointed.

In commencing their role the volunteer commits to the aims, values and key policies of Advantage. They also commit to delivering the key tasks outlined in the relevant role description.

When appointed, all volunteers must have a named contact at Advantage. This may be a member of staff or a Volunteer Coordinator. The named contact is responsible for guiding and supporting the volunteer in their role and should be available to discuss any aspect of the volunteer's role. A volunteer must be informed in writing (letter or email) if their Advantage contact changes.

Each volunteer will be provided with relevant management and support. This will include regular, appropriate and mutually agreed contact. As a minimum, volunteers will be offered an annual review, which offers the opportunity to discuss their role, share feedback and identify individual development and support needs.

Advantage will also provide appropriate recognition and occasions to celebrate volunteers and their work, on an individual and group basis, according to specific role(s), commitment and length of service.

Advantage has a procedure to help resolve any type of problems that arise, and will be carried out by an appropriate person to ensure fair and equitable treatment of volunteers.

Volunteers cannot commit Advantage to expenditure, e.g. events, contracts, expenses (other than those incurred in the course of their work for Advantage).

Health & Safety

Advantage will ensure that all volunteers are provided with the appropriate information, supervision and training required to enable them to complete voluntary work safely. This includes providing suitable systems and procedures and guidance is outlined in The Health and Safety Policy.

Volunteers must take reasonable care of themselves and others while volunteering for Advantage, and follow any health and safety advice and instruction given for their role. Volunteers should co-operate with Advantage on health and safety matters, and immediately report accidents/incidents (including near misses – accidents/incidents that may have lead to injury). Volunteers should not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

Advantage has a duty of care to volunteers to ensure they are supported in their role, as well as our young people. If a volunteer finds themselves in a situation which is a threat to personal safety, their first point of contact should be a member of Advantage staff. This also details the steps to follow if the named contact is unavailable (this procedure is also covered during volunteer induction training)

Expenses

Advantage endeavours to reimburse volunteers reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, however the decision to reimburse expenses is made at the Advantage's discretion, based on their assessment of the requirements of Advantage, the available budget and the volunteer's own needs.

Insurance

Advantage provides Employers Liability and Public Liability cover for all volunteers whilst working on Advantage activities.

All volunteers that hold Business Class motor insurance will be automatically covered for their work on behalf of Advantage. However, if their insurance is limited to social and domestic use then they will have to discuss their role as an Advantage volunteer with their insurance company to ensure that they are fully covered. Volunteers will be asked to sign the relevant section on the Expenses form to confirm that they have agreed their driving on Advantage business with their insurers before we can reimburse mileage costs.

Confidentiality

All volunteers are required to comply with Advantage's Confidentiality Statement which appears on Advantages Terms & Conditions of Employment (including voluntary employment) with regard to their dealings with young people, and to keep confidential any Advantage information they become aware of through their volunteering that is not in the public domain.

Volunteers are required to assign copyright to Advantage of any work produced as a part of their volunteering role or activity.

Advantage, in complying with the Data Protection Act 1998, will treat in confidence the information it holds about volunteers. The information will be held while there is a legitimate business purpose for doing so. Volunteers have the right to request to see all the information held about them by Advantage.

Volunteer information, such as application forms, references and any reports regarding conduct concerns, will be stored in a safe and secure location.

Leaving Advantage

Volunteers are free to cease volunteering with Advantage at any time, although, wherever possible, an agreed period leading up to this point would be helpful in order to give Advantage time to make any alternative arrangements required. It is possible that there may also be times when Advantage will ask a volunteer to cease volunteering for various reasons. Wherever possible we will offer the volunteer the opportunity to feedback before leaving their role, and ensure they are appropriately thanked for their support.

Feedback

We provide a range of opportunities for volunteers to offer feedback on our processes, support and work. These are inclusive of the annual reviews. Should a volunteer wish to make a complaint, they are invited to put their complaint in writing and this will be given to the relevant member of Advantage and responded to within 14 days.