



Volunteer Policy and Contract

2007

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1 About Advocacy and Volunteering In AdvoCard

1i What AdvoCard aims to do:

AdvoCard provides a service of advocacy to users of mental health services in Edinburgh. Through our advocacy service, we aim to:

- * provide one-to-one long and short term advocacy relationships
- * support individual mental health service users to resolve specific issues in their lives and to defer and manage crisis.
- * promote AdvoCard and foster realistic expectations of the project
- * raise awareness of the needs and issues of mental health service users both in the community and amongst service providers and planners
- * Identify gaps in mental health services and help plan future provision.
- * We try to be flexible to the needs of individual service users, and uphold principles of a good quality advocacy service.

1ii Principles of Advocacy

The essential features of a good quality advocacy service are

- * Independence
- * Empowerment
- * Impartiality
- * Confidentiality

In a report on AdvoCard commissioned in 1999. AdvoCard was found to meet all of these criteria.

1iii Volunteering In AdvoCard

*Volunteers will be considered by AdvoCard to be unpaid workers with rights and responsibilities.

* Volunteer work is done on an unpaid basis to benefit the community- It is done though free choice- Formal volunteer work Involves mutual commitment and responsibilities in the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation, within which both have rights.

Good Practice Guidelines

2i. General

* It is the responsibility of AdvoCard workers to identify ways in which the work of AdvoCard can be enhanced by the involvement of volunteers; and to ensure that these opportunities complement rather than supplement the work of the paid staff. The introduction of volunteers into new areas of work will be discussed at Management Committee meetings.

* AdvoCard will seek the involvement of volunteers in the management and delivery of its services.

* The tasks to be performed by volunteers will be clearly defined; with boundaries of responsibility established.

2ii Relationship between Volunteers and Paid Staff

* Volunteers will have their tasks and responsibilities clearly defined and will not be used simply to assist paid workers.

* Volunteers will not be asked to take on tasks formerly undertaken by paid workers or to work in ways which facilitate a decrease in paid employment

2iii Recruitment and Selection

* Volunteers will be asked to provide 2 referees upon completion of training.

* All references will be taken up before volunteering begins.

* In the event of a negative reference, the person applying for volunteer work will be advised that an unsatisfactory reference had been sent.

* Volunteers taking up paid employment or other voluntary work are entitled to a reference from AdvoCard.

* All volunteers must complete a Conviction Declaration Form, prior to attending the Stage 1 training course. The information contained in these forms is treated in the strictest confidence and in line with AdvoCard's Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy. Guidance will be given to volunteers on how they should fill in the forms and details given of where they can seek independent advice on the declaration of convictions.

* AdvoCard expects all volunteers to comply with its existing policies and procedures. All volunteers will be given a Volunteer Advocacy Worker's Manual of policies and procedures, including policies for their protection and codes of conduct, at Session 10 of the Stage 1 training. All volunteers have to sign to say they understand and agree to work by AdvoCard's policies and procedures, before they can go ahead and do advocacy work with AdvoCard.

* Volunteers will be asked to sign an agreement which outlines their rights and responsibilities.

- * Volunteers will be given information on legislation which may affect their work.
- * Information held by AdvoCard on a volunteer will be kept confidential and will not be communicated, unless it is our legal duty to do so.
- * AdvoCard does not commit itself to accept all offers of help; AdvoCard will give a volunteer reasons for declining their services and where possible refer them to another organization (e.g. Volunteer Centre Edinburgh) who might be better placed to help them.

2 Support for Volunteers

- * AdvoCard will invest financial and staffing resources for the adequate support of volunteers.
- * AdvoCard will ensure appropriate training, supervision and support for volunteers. AdvoCard will aim to employ the practice of ongoing review to monitor the progress of volunteers.
- * AdvoCard will ensure that the appropriate grievance procedure is put into place.
- * Volunteers will be given clear information about expenses that can be claimed and information on how to make a claim.
- * AdvoCard will ensure adequate provision of insurance for volunteers involved in its services.

2v Code of Conduct and Counselling Out

- * Volunteers are expected to abide by AdvoCard's standards of behaviour (see 4ii). If staff have reason to believe that this is not being done, appropriate steps will be taken.
- * If the services of a volunteer are no longer appropriate AdvoCard reserves the right to end his or her involvement. In this eventuality the volunteer will normally be informed of the reason.

3. Training

* All volunteers will be expected to complete successfully the AdvoCard Stage 1 training course for new Volunteer Advocacy Workers by meeting all of the objectives outlined in the course,

* All volunteers must attend all sessions. If a session is missed for unavoidable reasons, either the volunteer will attend the equivalent session in the next course. or the Trainers will arrange suitable tutoring.

* On completion of the training course, volunteers will have compiled a comprehensive information pack relating to the topics of each session.

* Volunteers will be given 'top-up' training where required. Volunteers should accept the need for further training in order to improve the quality of their work.

* Volunteers are encouraged to request training topics and identify training and support needs.

* Individual training needs and requests will be discussed at support meetings.

* Volunteers should accept that complex situations may arise which require further or more intensive support or training.

4 Rights and Responsibilities

4i AdvoCard recognises that volunteers have the following rights:

- * to know what is expected of them
- * to have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- * to be shown appreciation
- * to have healthy and safe working conditions
- * to be insured
- * to know their rights and responsibilities
- * to be paid out of pocket expenses as outlined
- * to be trained
- * to be free from discrimination
- * to experience personal development through participation
- * to request a reference in relation to their voluntary work
- * to have their confidentiality respected.

AdvoCard expects that volunteers will:

- * be reliable
- * be honest
- * respect confidentiality
- * attend training, supervision and support sessions where agreed
- * carry out their tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of AdvoCard.
- * work within agreed policies, guidelines, remits and legal requirements.

4ii Expected Standards of Behaviour with Regard to AdvoCard

- * Volunteers will act at all times in their professional capacity in a manner which reflects the trust and confidence placed in them by AdvoCard.
- * Volunteers will not, through their actions or statements, knowingly damage the public standing of AdvoCard.
- * No contact with, nor comment to the media should be made in any circumstances, without prior agreement of AdvoCard.
- * Volunteers will not disclose information about AdvoCard and its work which is known to be confidential.

4 iii General Working Requirements

Administration

* All volunteers should complete expenses sheets accurately and produce relevant receipts etc to the office as promptly as possible.

* Volunteers should not incur expenditure during their volunteering time over and above the limits outlined by the staff.

* AdvoCard is required to send out to all volunteers any information as early as possible and give people enough notice of meetings.

Work Arrangements

* Volunteers should keep in close touch with staff, to feed back as soon as it is reasonably possible, and to report difficulties or concerns immediately.

* Volunteers should give as much notice as reasonably possible of holidays, time out, or leaving.

* Volunteers have the right to withdraw from volunteer work. or refuse tasks, and should be clear about saying NO.

* Volunteers will ensure that meetings with service users will take place at a location which is appropriate, safe, and agreed by staff.

4iv Support

* Volunteers should attend support meetings regularly.

* Volunteers can seek support from the AdvoCard office should there be any difficulties they wish to discuss between support meetings.

5. Confidentiality

AdvoCard upholds the rights of the service users to receive a professional, supportive and appropriate response to their requests, and believes that a policy of confidentiality is integral to achieving this aim. *It should also be accepted that it may be necessary to override this policy in the event of legal proceedings or potential personal danger to the service users themselves or others.*

As a volunteer you may come across, or be told of, information about an individual which they would not wish to be passed on outside AdvoCard. It is the duty of volunteers not to pass on any such information unless in the context of supervision, support or good management of AdvoCard. Real situations used in training should be checked out with those concerned. Volunteers should be aware that chatting with people outside AdvoCard can accidentally lead to confidentiality being broken.

- o Because of their considerable contact with service users, and the nature of that contact, volunteers will be aware of confidential information. Any breach of confidentiality will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.
- o It is important for volunteers where possible to be clear about their limits with those they represent, so that they are not placed in a position where they are hearing information they would prefer not to hear, or feel that they are not able to keep within the boundaries of confidentiality.
- o Often volunteers may feel that a close friend can be trusted and may be a form of support. Remember that no matter how close or concerned they are, they do not have the right to confidential information about AdvoCard or its users.
- o Volunteers should not leave personal information in view of any other person, nor discuss such information within earshot of anyone else.
- o Volunteers are bound by the terms of their contract on confidentiality on leaving AdvoCard. Failure to adhere to this is likely to result in AdvoCard taking appropriate legal action.

6. Volunteer Contract

The aim of this contract is to clarify with volunteers the agreement they have with AdvoCard in undertaking any aspect of unpaid work, and the agreement AdvoCard has with them in supporting them in such work.

This contract also binds volunteers to the Code of Conduct, policies, guidelines and strategy documents currently existing, and any new arrangements, developments, and updates which relate to AdvoCard.

This contract is written from the premise that clear boundaries are essential in providing quality services for service users, and that volunteers have a right to expect clarity, training, and support for carrying out the agreed tasks.

AdvoCard's responsibilities

- o AdvoCard has a responsibility to provide comprehensive induction training to prepare volunteers for their work with AdvoCard. In addition AdvoCard will attempt to further meet volunteers' training needs through top-up training as appropriate.

- o AdvoCard has a responsibility to provide support for all volunteers.

- o AdvoCard will pay reasonable expenses incurred through involvement with AdvoCard.

- o AdvoCard supports the rights of volunteers to be consulted on matters affecting volunteering through their representation on the Management Committee.

- o AdvoCard is committed to providing a working environment which aims to be safe for all volunteers.

- o AdvoCard is committed to working within the ethos of Equal Opportunities. It will regularly review such policies and address breaches of the policy.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- o All volunteers will have completed successfully AdvoCard's basic training course.

- o Volunteers will attempt to participate in any ongoing and specific training which may be required or offered by AdvoCard.

- o Volunteers will accept supervision and support from staff as staff consider appropriate.

- o Volunteers will claim expenses regularly.

- o Volunteers will be expected to honour their time commitment to AdvoCard, and give adequate notice of any changes or inability to attend.

- o Volunteers will feed back to the office on a regular basis.

- o Volunteers will work to the policies and guidelines of AdvoCard.
- o Volunteers will report immediately any accidents or incidents which happen in the course of their volunteering.
- o Volunteers will ensure that their personal information is kept up to date (eg address phone number etc)
- o Volunteers will not represent AdvoCard unless agreed by AdvoCard staff.
- o Volunteers will take responsibility for any property belonging to AdvoCard which is in their possession and return it on leaving the organisation,
- o Volunteers will respect confidentiality of service users, fellow volunteers and staff.
- o Volunteers will respect and honour the terms of this contract on leaving AdvoCard.

Breach of Volunteer Contract

- o Failure to adhere to the responsibilities outlined in this contract will be viewed as a breach of contract, unless there has been prior agreement with the workers.
- o Serious breaches of contract will be dealt with using AdvoCard’s disciplinary procedure, and is likely to result in the volunteer being asked to leave.
- o Any breaches of the terms of the contract which apply after the volunteer has left are liable to result in AdvoCard taking the appropriate action,

I agree to the obligations outlined In this contract.

Volunteer signature

Signature of AdvoCard worker

Date

April 2006

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