



VOLUNTEERING POLICY

1. WHY HAVE ONE?

This policy sets out the broad principles for how FOCUS works with volunteers within the organisation. It brings together a wide range of external and internal good practice in the hope that it will continue to help FOCUS grow and develop the standard of its volunteering.

2. VOLUNTEERING ETHOS

FOCUS is an organisation that has a high level of volunteer involvement. We seek to create an environment in which volunteers can contribute to maximum effect to the smooth running and development of the organisation, and where all volunteers are effectively supported in their own personal development and growth.

3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

FOCUS believes that through difference and diversity, people learn more about themselves and others. FOCUS' programme participants include people from across the community, and we aim to ensure that our volunteer base also reflects our local communities. We are committed to taking active steps to ensure that all members of the community have equal opportunity to volunteer. This will occur through:

- 3.1 Ensuring that FOCUS' recruitment materials specifically welcome volunteer applications from all sections of the community.
- 3.2 Involving our existing black and ethnic minority volunteers in recruiting others.
- 3.3 Valuing all of our volunteers, regardless of the frequency of their volunteering or the length of their involvement
- 3.4 Ensuring that barriers to volunteering are recognised and removed, e.g. volunteers should not be out of pocket.
- 3.5 Creating an inclusive rather than an exclusive organisation, e.g. not using internal jargon where possible.

4. VOLUNTEERS TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Although we will usually aim to recruit volunteers to specific roles or task areas, our needs may change over time or particular roles may, by mutual agreement, develop and responsibilities grow. For example, a volunteer may start contributing to FOCUS as a team volunteer but may progress on to another volunteering position such as team advisor. Our volunteers are actively encouraged and supported in progressing in this way and in developing their skills and self-confidence.

There are broad task descriptions for each of the common volunteering opportunities available with FOCUS and a Volunteer Agreement that we ask all volunteers to sign. In this way, volunteers are made aware of FOCUS' responsibilities to them and of their responsibilities to FOCUS. This is also achieved through volunteers receiving a copy of the FOCUS Volunteers' Handbook that provides further information about the support that FOCUS provides.

5. NEW AND EXISTING VOLUNTEERS

We recognise that all of our volunteers have something to contribute to FOCUS, regardless of how long they have been volunteering for the organisation. FOCUS supports this through:

- 5.1 Creating exciting and challenging volunteering opportunities
- 5.2 Providing on-going training and support to all volunteers
- 5.3 Providing Volunteer Log Books, within the Volunteer Handbook, which allow our volunteers to reflect upon and track their experiences and development with FOCUS

6. WHO ARE FOCUS'S VOLUNTEERS?

By "volunteer" we mean someone who gives their time and their service to FOCUS and does not have a contract of employment in respect of that service.

Volunteers are an integral part of our 'workforce'. They play a vital role in helping to directly deliver our programmes to our participants (often with a 1:1 ratio), as well as helping FOCUS in organisational or administrative capacities.

7. VOLUNTEERS' COMMITMENT

We ask that, in committing to volunteer for FOCUS, people take on the following:

- 7.1 An acceptance of the FOCUS Volunteer Agreement
- 7.2 An acceptance of a broad task description for the role that they are about to undertake
- 7.3 A willingness to undergo relevant training appropriate to the role that they are volunteering for
- 7.4 Adherence to all relevant FOCUS policies and procedures e.g. Child Protection Policy.

8. WHO MANAGES VOLUNTEERS?

A member of FOCUS staff will directly manage all FOCUS volunteers. Our staff are responsible for all recruitment, selection, training and support of volunteers. In some cases experienced volunteers may support this process.

9. RECRUITMENT

We aim to ensure that all recruitment materials and methods reflect our desire to welcome and encourage volunteers from across all sections of the community, in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy. All advertisements and literature should make it clear that FOCUS is working towards equal opportunities for all.

We work hard to ensure that our recruitment processes and materials convey the importance that volunteers have to FOCUS and accurately reflect the range of different volunteering opportunities that we offer, as well as the many benefits for our volunteers themselves.

Following recruitment, we will ensure that there are systems in place to effectively train, support and supervise volunteers.

10. SELECTION

Welcoming and matching our volunteers to an appropriate role is achieved through our careful selection process. This begins with an application form, followed by an interview

and is completed through the taking up of two references and conducting a check for criminal convictions through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

Initial interviews with potential volunteers, which we see very much as a two way process, aim to ensure that there is a good match between the needs of FOCUS and the skills and interests of the volunteer. We believe strongly that volunteering works best when there is mutual benefit.

Where an appropriate volunteering opportunity or vacancy does not exist, we are happy to explore alternative possibilities and the development of new volunteer roles

Our selection procedure demonstrates our commitment to 'best practice' in recruiting volunteers to work with young people. We take very seriously our legal duty of care to protect the clients we work with. As our work involves access to young and potentially vulnerable people, FOCUS is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Therefore, volunteers are obliged to disclose any previous criminal convictions and to agree to an enhanced CRB check.

Certain volunteer roles may require additional training and further interviews before being undertaken.

Throughout the whole of the selection process we will adhere to our Equal Opportunities statement. That is, there will be no discrimination as regards to age, culture, disability, employment status, financial status, gender, HIV and AIDS status, language, marital status, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, social class and political affiliation. We ensure this by:

- 10.1 Wherever possible, having two people interviewing new volunteers
- 10.2 The interviewers adhering to a set 'bank' of questions.
- 10.3 Making decisions to accept or reject an application to volunteer will be made based upon the information provided by the applicant, their referees and the CRB, avoiding prejudice
- 10.4 The interviewers remaining flexible when considering the task description to allow for individual circumstances, provided no FOCUS policies are breached
- 10.5 Training in Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity for all interviewers.

Task descriptions and person specifications for the volunteering positions available will be created in advance of recruitment activities.

11. TRAINING, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

All volunteers will receive training upon joining FOCUS. At the start of each Inspire Residential, two days of training will be provided to the volunteers to ensure that everyone understands their role and responsibilities. The training that these project volunteers undertake includes:

- 11.1 FOCUS' aims and core values
- 11.2 Child protection and working with vulnerable people
- 11.3 Personal development and facilitating the learning process
- 11.4 Safety during activities
- 11.5 Food hygiene
- 11.6 First aid
- 11.7 Manual handling
- 11.8 Transport safety
- 11.9 Fire, accident and emergency procedures

New and existing volunteers need to know to whom they are accountable and who is responsible for supporting them. This will usually be either the Project Manager or the Programme Manager. On Residentials, Team Advisors will also provide support to other volunteers.

Giving people support is an important part of volunteering. This will happen both during and outside of projects and will include:

- 11.10 Ensuring volunteers are fully aware of project health and safety requirements.
- 11.11 One-to-one and group support and regular progress/ development reviews
- 11.12 Encouraging volunteers to claim expenses so they are not out of pocket.
- 11.13 Thanking volunteers regularly and seeking opportunities to give encouragement and feedback.
- 11.14 Providing transport, accommodation, training and food for volunteers on projects.

12. WHAT IF THINGS GO WRONG?

If things do go wrong, we encourage all volunteers to make their concerns known to us so that we can work together to remedy them. A volunteer should inform us if they feel that FOCUS' Volunteering Policy is not being properly applied. If required, FOCUS has a formal grievance procedure that volunteers can follow.

Similarly, we aim to work supportively with our individual volunteers to address any concerns that we may hold about their volunteering activities. FOCUS staff may, if it is deemed necessary, invoke the Disciplinary Procedure