

DEP Volunteer Policy

DEP and volunteer value

DEP recognises and values the vital role volunteers play in many varied areas of its work, and in pursuing our organisational aims and objectives. Volunteers complement and support the work of paid staff, and bring a host of important qualities to the organisation, including skills and expertise, life experience, and time and enthusiasm.

This Volunteer Policy outlines how volunteers are involved with the work of DEP (detailed information on policy areas such as for example, Health and Safety or Expenses can be found in the Staff Handbook). DEP appreciates volunteering is a two-way process which benefits both the organisation and volunteers, so are keen to encourage flexibility and choice for those volunteering, and most importantly to emphasize that volunteering should amongst other things be fun!

DEP is committed to reviewing policy and practices regularly to ensure that progress is being made towards these ends. At least one meeting of the Management Committee each term will have such a review as an agenda item, where input from volunteers and members of staff will be sought to assist in this evaluation.

Definition

This is the most formal part of this policy, but it should help explain clearly how DEP defines a volunteer.

A volunteer is a person who undertakes activities on the behalf of DEP and under the direction of DEP, but does not have a contract of employment and is not paid for their time (although they may be provided with out-of-pocket expenses).

DEP works with many organisations whose members may be volunteers. This policy does not apply to such individuals undertaking activities for DEP whose principal relationship is with the external organisation and not DEP.

Role of volunteers

DEP equally values any contribution volunteers can make to the organisation - be it to undertake one specific activity, several activities or many different activities - and similarly values any length of time volunteers can commit to the organisation, whether short term or long term. Regardless of the specific contribution and commitment volunteers make to the organisation, DEP will do its best to make sure the subsequent practices are followed:

Recruitment and selection

DEP uses a variety of methods to recruit volunteers dependent upon the activity to be undertaken. In all cases, DEP is committed to equality of opportunity for applicants, and to building and maintaining a diverse workforce, as set out in the DEP Equal Opportunities Policy.

Selection will generally involve an informal interview either face to face or by telephone between the applicant and the volunteer coordinator. The aims of such a selection process are to:

- provide applicants with sufficient information about DEP and the appropriate volunteer role, so applicants can make an informed decision on whether or not to pursue their application
- allow applicants and the volunteer co-ordinator to assess whether or not the applicant has the requisite skills, or potential skills after training, to fulfil the role's requirements.

Where successful applicants will be working with vulnerable people (as defined in the DEP Child Protection Policy), they will be requested to complete a CBC (Criminal Background Check), further details of which can also be found in the DEP Child Protection Policy.

Induction and Training

Volunteers will be supported by a volunteer coordinator, who will familiarise volunteers with DEP, the volunteer's role and the area(s) of activity they will be involved in, as set out in the Staff Handbook. Any training needed to fulfil the role will be identified at this stage and appropriate action taken to provide this. The volunteer and the volunteer coordinator will review any subsequent training needs (either in-house support or courses) that are relevant to the volunteer role.

Support

DEP believes that organisational support for volunteers is essential, and is committed to improving all aspects of the volunteering experience within our organisation. We pay particular attention to:

- providing volunteers with a formal point of contact in the volunteer coordinator and informal support from other members of staff, a friendly working environment, and as much support and training as volunteers need to undertake activities
- ensuring volunteers are given clear information on their role within DEP and the area(s) of activity they will be involved in. We will provide flexibility and choice (to the best of our ability) so volunteers can develop their role within DEP should they so wish
- respecting volunteers' skills, dignity and individual wishes
- consulting volunteers if changes are to be introduced that affect their role
- fully involving volunteers in all activities relevant to their role, and social activities should they so wish
- dealing with any problems that arise sympathetically and fairly. Efforts will always be made to reach a mutually acceptable solution
- understanding that volunteers do leave DEP, and when they do we like to comprehend why, so the organisation can better support other volunteers
- volunteers who are seeking paid employment so they can be supported in application procedures, interviews and so on as appropriate.

Expenses

DEP will reimburse reasonable travel expenses incurred during travel to and from the volunteer's home and the place of work, where the volunteer is travelling to undertake activities for the organisation. Any other reasonable travel expenses incurred whilst undertaking activities for DEP will be reimbursed.

DEP will also provide lunch or reimburse lunch expenses up to the value of £2 per day. Childcare costs may be reimbursed by agreement.

The Staff Handbook provides further details on expenses.

Insurance

DEP will provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst undertaking activities for DEP that are authorised by the volunteer coordinator. If volunteers use a personal motor vehicle whilst carrying out volunteer activities, the volunteer coordinator will need to see evidence that the volunteer has appropriate cover provided under a private car insurance policy.

Equal opportunities and diversity

DEP is committed to equality of opportunity for all volunteers and will ensure to the best of our ability that volunteers are not discriminated against on the grounds of their sex or marital status; colour or race; disability; religious or political beliefs or any other unwarrantable factor. DEP is also committed to building and maintaining a diverse workforce.

All of DEP's policies have been written with these principles in mind. Further details of both equal opportunities and diversity at DEP can be found in the DEP's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Health and Safety

Volunteers will receive training on Health and Safety as part of the volunteer induction, where any appropriate Health and Safety risk assessment will be identified and action taken to provide this. If a volunteer's circumstances or requirements change, further Health and Safety risk assessment(s) will be conducted as appropriate. Further information can be found in the Health and Safety Policy.

Cases of dispute

DEP recognises that from time to time disputes may arise within the organisation. In order to resolve these disputes as fairly and amicably as possible, all parties to the dispute should follow the practices set out in the Grievance Procedure or the Disciplinary Procedure as appropriate. Details of both procedures can be found in the Grievance and Disciplinary Policy.