



Handbook for Volunteer Advocacy Workers

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Volunteer Advocacy Workers Job Description

AdvoCard is an independent advocacy scheme for mental health service users living in Edinburgh. Volunteer Advocacy Workers support individuals to get their voices heard and their views across on issues that affect their day-to-day lives in the community. Volunteer Advocacy Workers are volunteers who have completed our Volunteer Advocacy Workers' Initial Training Programme and have been accepted as volunteers with AdvoCard. People from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences join our project as volunteers including those who have direct experience of using mental health services. AdvoCard reserves the right, at all times, to have the final decision on who works as a Volunteer Advocacy Worker with AdvoCard. The Board of Directors oversees the work of the project.

Most Volunteer Advocacy Workers work with service users through AdvoCard's:

- Short-term Advocacy Service - where a service user approaches the project for advocacy support for a specific issue. One of the Volunteer Advocacy Workers is linked to that service user for an issue-led advocacy arrangement. Often the service user and volunteer will meet once or twice and then when the advocacy is completed their work together is ended. Sometimes the issues raised are complex and inter-related. Advocacy in this case may involve meetings over several

months, with the relationship ending when the advocacy has reached a point of resolution.

Volunteer Advocacy Workers also occasionally deliver advocacy through AdvoCard's:

- Long-Term matched Advocacy Service – a relationship where a service user is matched to a specific Volunteer Advocacy Worker. The pair develop a written agreement that anticipates their future advocacy work based on the experience of the service user. This is a smaller part of our service but one that we are keen to maintain as it is highly valued by some long-term service users. They know that if they hit a difficult time or some kind of a crisis, they have an established relationship with

a Volunteer Advocacy Worker who can support them. We ask that volunteers in a long-term advocacy relationship commit as far as possible to being available for one year's volunteering.

Main Tasks of an AdvoCard Volunteer Advocacy Worker:

- o To meet with a mental health service user and to develop a rapport for the purpose of providing advocacy support.
- o To determine the nature of the issue that the mental health service user is experiencing by means of active listening.
- o To outline and explore the options available to that service user to deal with the defined problem or issue.
- o To help to develop a plan or strategy with the service user to achieve their desired outcome.
- o To provide any practical means possible to help that service user achieve their desired outcome. Such support may take the form of:
 - researching relevant information
- o To accompany the service user to appointments and then providing appropriate assistance to the service user to ensure that their views are taken into account by the professionals from whom they are seeking a service. Examples are taking notes of the meeting or speaking on behalf of the service user when requested to do so by the service user, helping to write letters or fill in forms, supplying other forms of practical support which help to ensure that the service user's views about their care and treatment are noted.
- o Debrief with the service user about their advocacy experience.
- o Attend Support & Development Groups and ongoing training as agreed with the Advocacy Manager and Volunteer Coordinator.
- o Record advocacy work in line with AdvoCard's procedures.

The principle underlying any advocacy work that the Volunteer Advocacy Worker carries out on behalf of the service user, is that the Volunteer Advocacy Worker acts under the direction of the service user rather than that of any other party. The Volunteer Advocacy Worker may have to put his/her personal view to one side in order to ensure that the expressed wishes of the service user are taken in to account.

Selection Criteria

To carry out such work, AdvoCard Volunteer Advocacy Workers are people who are deemed to have particular qualities and understanding of mental health and related issues.

For selection for our Initial Training for Volunteer Advocacy Workers, we look for potential volunteers to demonstrate:

- A positive attitude to people who use the mental health services and an understanding of why advocacy is necessary.
- A commitment to the principles of advocacy ascribed to by AdvoCard.
- Ability and commitment to complete the AdvoCard training.
- Ability and commitment to carry out the responsibilities agreed between AdvoCard, the service user and the Volunteer Advocacy Worker.
- A willingness to learn and a willingness to examine personal attitudes and to be open minded.
- Good communication skills, particularly listening skills.
- A commitment to AdvoCard's Policy of Equal Opportunities and a positive attitude to people who may have experiences of discrimination.

To be successful in going ahead as a Volunteer Advocacy Worker, participants will also be expected to demonstrate throughout the Stage 1 training:

- The ability to put personal opinions to one side and support the service user to get his/her own ideas across.
- Realism about what can be achieved and the ability to respond objectively as a Volunteer Advocacy Worker.
- Awareness of the need for confidentiality.
- Patience and the ability to work at the pace of the service user.

AdvoCard reserves the right, at all times, to have the final decision on who attends AdvoCard training programmes and who goes ahead as a volunteer.

Code of Practice for Volunteer Advocacy Workers

This Code of Practice seeks to ensure that people who use AdvoCard's services receive consistently high quality advocacy and have confidence in the support they receive. It also enables Volunteer Advocacy Workers to work in a clear and responsible way and lets everyone who comes into contact with AdvoCard know what advocacy is in AdvoCard and what they can expect.

This Code of Practice is designed to work alongside the SIAA's Principles and Standards for Independent Advocacy. AdvoCard Volunteer Advocacy Workers are expected to work in a way that promotes and protects the Principles and Standards for Independent Advocacy and, with the support of AdvoCard, ensure that advocacy:

- puts the people who use it first
- is accountable
- is free as it can be from conflict of interest
- is accessible

(Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance 2008, available at siaa.org.uk)

1. Role of the Volunteer Advocacy Worker

1.1 Volunteer Advocacy Worker should act ethically at all times. This means treating all who come into contact with the project (including service users, workers, other volunteers and carers) with respect, courtesy and honesty. Volunteer Advocacy Workers should act at all times in such a way as to respect the dignity of others and maintain confidentiality and privacy.

1.2 Volunteer Advocacy Worker should not impose their own views. They are there to help others to express their views and wishes. Advocacy is about finding out what someone wants and helping him or her to express that opinion, not imposing what the Volunteer Advocacy Worker thinks is best.

1.3 The Volunteer Advocacy Worker must give as much information as possible about the choices available to the service user. If asked they can advise on the likely outcomes of choices or actions, but the decision must always be the service users.

1.4 The Volunteer Advocacy Worker is not a neutral mediator or part of the service provision team. The role of the Volunteer Advocacy Worker is only to

support the service user to express their wishes and not to persuade or influence the service user. This should be made clear to any relative, worker or service provider who attempts to use the Volunteer Advocacy Worker in this way.

1.5 The Volunteer Advocacy Worker should ensure that at any meeting at which others are present, all parties speak directly to the service user and not through the Volunteer Advocacy Worker.

1.6 Sometimes the Volunteer Advocacy Worker may not need to do any more than offer back up information or moral support. If the service user is able and prepared to speak on their own behalf they should be supported to do this. Self-advocacy is more empowering than having some one else speak for you.

1.7 Volunteer Advocacy Workers do not do things that the service user has not asked them to do. The service user has a responsibility to decide the pace of the work, how much they want you to do and when the relationship should end.

1.8 Sometimes people may find it hard to express what their concerns and needs are. The Volunteer Advocacy Worker should be prepared to take as much time as is necessary to ensure that they have fully understood what the person wants.

1.9 A Volunteer Advocacy Worker should not promise more than they can achieve. The Volunteer Advocacy Worker must be open and honest about their own limitations and about the limitations of the AdvoCard project. If there is something that can't be done, then the service user should be made aware of it.

1.10 A Volunteer Advocacy Worker must be aware of the importance of keeping promises and appointments as service users may have felt betrayed and let down by services in the past.

1.11 Volunteer Advocacy Workers must avoid personal attacks on service providers, service users or other workers.

1.12 Service users should be encouraged to compose and sign their own letters.

2. Confidentiality within the advocacy relationship.

2.1 A Volunteer Advocacy Worker must protect and maintain the confidentiality of all those who are a part of the AdvoCard project in line with our policies.

2.2 No outside contact should be made concerning the service user or steps taken regarding their situation without their knowledge and consent.

2.3 In extreme circumstances, where the safety and well-being of the service user or that of a third person is involved, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. If this situation arises it should be discussed first with the

service user and with an AdvoCard worker.

2.4 The Volunteer Advocacy Worker should never hold information about the service user's situation, circumstances or treatment that is not available to the service user. Any information that the Volunteer Advocacy Worker gains in meetings or conversations at which the service user is not present should be passed on to them as soon as possible.

3. Boundaries

Boundaries are about establishing what is considered to be appropriate behaviour, allowing supportive advocacy relationships that are based on trust, respect and the appropriate use of power. They also help develop professionalism by encouraging high standards of work and consistency. Volunteers should always be aware of the importance of boundaries and liaise with staff if there are any issues arising.

Boundaries for Volunteer Advocacy Workers:

- a) Volunteers should not intentionally have contact with their advocacy partners outside of their advocacy work, unless in special circumstances by prior arrangement with advocacy staff.
- b) Volunteers should not give out their home or mobile number, email, home address or other such personal information or communicate with their advocacy partners through social media sites.
- c) Volunteers should never accept personal gifts, either tangible or in-kind, from their advocacy partners. Advocacy partners should be encouraged to express their thanks via feedback forms if appropriate. Occasionally AdvoCard service users like to hand in chocolates or biscuits or similar and these can be accepted by staff on occasion, to be shared with everyone involved with AdvoCard. Volunteers should always liaise with staff if they are unsure or feel like they are in a difficult position.
- d) Volunteers should not seek transport from or provide transport to their advocacy partners.
- e) Volunteers should declare as soon as possible to staff if they have any previous knowledge or relationship with an advocacy partner, so that the situation can be assessed and any conflict of interest can be avoided.
- f) Volunteers should keep staff up to date with their personal and professional situation, as appropriate, so that boundaries can be maintained and conflict of interest avoided.
- g) Volunteers should never enter into financial transactions of any kind with their advocacy partners.
- g) When volunteers feel that boundaries are being tested and there is potential for a breakdown in the advocacy relationship, or if boundaries have been compromised, they have a responsibility to discuss this with AdvoCard

staff at the earliest opportunity. It is important that volunteers use the support offered by AdvoCard in the course of their work so that support staff can also help identify possible boundary issues before they affect the relationship.

4. Safety

4.1 Safety should be the main priority in all decisions taken during advocacy work. If a situation causes concern to the Volunteer Advocacy Worker regarding the safety of themselves, the service user or a third party, the Volunteer Advocacy Worker should act in a way that is consistent with this principle. The circumstances should be discussed with AdvoCard workers at the earliest opportunity. Should a situation arise outwith office hours, the Volunteer Advocacy Worker should take necessary action and the office should be informed through a message on the answering machine. AdvoCard workers will follow this up as a matter of urgency and will uphold decisions made by the Volunteer Advocacy Worker based on safety concerns.

4.2 If a Volunteer Advocacy Worker arranges to meet a service user outwith the project premises AdvoCard or another third party should be informed of the details of the arrangement. If necessary a message can be left on the AdvoCard answering machine.

4.3 Whenever possible arrangements should be made to meet in a public place e.g. a café or a convenient office. If this is impossible and a visit to the service user's home is essential, then this visit should not be made alone. A second party, either another Volunteer Advocacy Worker or a project worker must accompany the Volunteer Advocacy Worker on the visit.

4.4 Volunteer Advocacy Workers should not provide lifts to those using the Volunteer Advocacy Worker service. If it is necessary to accompany someone to an appointment or meeting then public transport or a taxi should be used. Travel costs incurred will be refunded on production of a ticket or receipt.

4.5 If making visits at night the Volunteer Advocacy Worker should take a taxi from door to door. AdvoCard provides the number of a contract taxi service for use on these occasions.

5. Equal Opportunities

5.1 AdvoCard has an Equal Opportunities policy. Volunteer Advocacy Workers should make themselves familiar with this document and adhere to the guidelines stated in it at all times.

6. Support

6.1 After each Volunteer Advocacy Worker contact or meeting, an AdvoCard worker will be available for debriefing and for reflecting on practice. This support will be made available as soon as is possible after the meeting.

6.2 There is an expectation that Volunteer Advocacy Workers will participate in Support & Development Groups meetings arranged by AdvoCard workers.

7. Information held by the project.

7.1 Information given to AdvoCard staff by service users and Volunteer Advocacy Workers will be treated as confidential in all cases.

7.2 No information will be shared as a matter of course with Board members or with other people connected with the project. There will be occasions however, when it will be necessary for information to be shared by AdvoCard support staff and with their supervisor or line manager.

7.3 If a situation arises where AdvoCard staff feel that it is necessary to share information with Board members or others connected with the project, (apart from supervisors) then the AdvoCard staff will inform the person to whom this information pertains, and will inform them of their reasons for sharing this information.

8. Health and Safety

8.1 AdvoCard works towards protecting and promoting the health and safety of all volunteers whilst they are engaged in the work of the project.

8.2 It is expected that all volunteers will follow the health and safety guidelines which AdvoCard provides.

9. Supervision/support

9.1 Regular meetings are arranged by AdvoCard workers for the purpose of group support.

9.2 The workers will endeavour to provide individual support for each Volunteer Advocacy Worker if requested to do so by the Volunteer Advocacy Worker. If an issue is identified by the workers, which it is felt necessary to discuss with a Volunteer Advocacy Worker, one of the workers will call a meeting. These meetings will be held as quickly as possible.

10. Absence/resignation

10.1 If at any time a Volunteer Advocacy Workers unable to attend a meeting or appointment which has been arranged with a service user, they should inform the AdvoCard workers so that alternative arrangements can be made.

10.2 When a Volunteer Advocacy Worker wishes to resign from the Volunteer Advocacy Worker service, they should give the AdvoCard workers reasonable notice of their intention.

11. Expenses

11.1 All reasonable expenses will be refunded to Volunteer Advocacy Workers on production of an appropriate receipt.

11.2 Expenses can include reasonable costs incurred through travel, purchase of tea, coffee and snacks, child care or carers' costs and telephone calls.

12. Legal liability

12.1 AdvoCard undertakes to provide insurance for all Volunteer Advocacy Workers and representatives whilst they are engaged in voluntary work for the project.

13. Record Keeping

13.1 AdvoCard has a system for recording all uses of the Volunteer Advocacy Worker service for monitoring and statistical purposes. Volunteer Advocacy Workers must become familiar with this system and should endeavour to keep records up to date at all times.

13.2 AdvoCard has an open access system of record keeping and Volunteer Advocacy Workers should ensure that any notes which are made during an interview as an aid to memory or for future reference are shared with the service user as they are made or immediately after.

13.3 These notes should be filed in the AdvoCard office and should not be removed from the office unless under special circumstances.

13.4 If it is felt necessary to take notes out of the office, e.g. in order to refer to figures or for information during a meeting with a third party, then the service user should be informed and their permission to use these notes requested.

14. Complaints

14.1 AdvoCard has a Complaints Procedure. Copies of this procedure will be made available to all Volunteer Advocacy Workers, service users and any others who come into contact with the project.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with AdvoCard's Policies and Procedures.

Volunteer Policy and Contract

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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 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.

2. 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 Board 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 initial training course. 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 will also obtain verification of the Volunteer's membership of the PVG scheme before they can begin their advocacy work.

The information contained in these forms is treated in the strictest confidence and in line with AdvoCard's Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

- AdvoCard expects all volunteers to comply with its existing policies and procedures. All volunteers will be given a Volunteer Advocacy Worker's Handbook of policies and procedures, including policies for their protection and codes of conduct, at their initial training. All volunteers will 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.

2iv 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 Initial Training 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 with support staff
- 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 and is in line with AdvoCard's Code of Practice for Volunteer Advocacy Workers.
- 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 not be possible to maintain confidentiality in the event of legal proceedings or potential danger to the service user 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Volunteers should not leave personal information in view of any other person, nor discuss such information within earshot of anyone else.
- 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:

- 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.
- AdvoCard has a responsibility to provide support for all volunteers.
- AdvoCard will pay reasonable expenses incurred through involvement with AdvoCard.
- AdvoCard supports the rights of volunteers to be consulted on matters affecting volunteering through their representation on the Board.
- AdvoCard is committed to providing a working environment which aims to be safe for all volunteers.
- 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
- All volunteers will have completed successfully AdvoCard's initial training course.
- Volunteers will attempt to participate in any ongoing and specific training which may be required or offered by AdvoCard.
- Volunteers will accept supervision and support from staff as staff consider appropriate.
- Volunteers will claim expenses regularly.
- Volunteers will be expected to honour their time commitment to AdvoCard, and give adequate notice of any changes or inability to attend.
- Volunteers will feed back to the office on a regular basis.
- Volunteers will work to the policies and guidelines of AdvoCard.
- Volunteers will report immediately any accidents or incidents which happen in the course of their volunteering.
- Volunteers will ensure that their personal information is kept up to date (e.g. address phone number etc.)
- Volunteers will not represent AdvoCard unless agreed by AdvoCard staff.
- Volunteers will take responsibility for any property belonging to AdvoCard which is in their possession and return it on leaving the organisation,
- Volunteers will respect confidentiality of service users, fellow volunteers and staff.
- Volunteers will respect and honour the terms of this contract on leaving AdvoCard.

Breach of Volunteer Contract

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.

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.

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 Name

Volunteer signature

Name of AdvoCard worker

Signature of AdvoCard worker

Date

Procedures for Volunteers Working in the Office at Leith Walk.

All Volunteer Advocacy Workers will be given an induction into the use of the office and its systems before their first appointment with a service user and at other appropriate times. This statement outlines some of the key points.

Confidentiality

AdvoCard's office diary needs to remain confidential. It contains names and often other information about service users that we have a responsibility to keep private. While we know it would sometimes be quicker for you to take the diary and make the appointment yourself, we appreciate your patience and know you understand our reasons. We also have to consider other things when making appointments, such as room availability, staff cover and other things that might be going on in the office, so we need to be part of any arrangements made.

Similarly, the filing cabinets hold a lot of confidential information, as you would expect. Again, we ask that you respect the confidentiality of the project and users of the service by always asking us to access a file or any other information that is stored within them.

Please always be aware that while the AdvoCard's office is a confidential environment, there can often be many people about. Please do not hesitate to ask to speak to staff 1:1 if you feel this is necessary.

Computers - Please be aware that a lot of people have access to the computers in the small meeting rooms. If you and/or a service user have been working on one, remember to delete your work when you have finished and empty the recycle bin. Also delete the browsing history if necessary. Please ask staff if you need help with any of this.

As they are open access, the computers in the small rooms are not on our secure network. If you want to save a document, liaise with support staff as to how to do this so that we can store it securely.

Resources - Our Administrator maintains a large leaflet collection in Reception. Please browse through these and let them know if you want copies of anything. If there are any leaflets/topics we are missing, please let the Administrator. Similarly we have a large library of books in Reception,

most of which can be borrowed. The Administrator has sign-out sheet for all loans. While there's no time limit on how long you can have a book out, we need to be able to keep track of who's got what.

Record Keeping – Record keeping within AdvoCard is governed by our policy on Data Protection (also contained in this manual)).

In general, we work to keep records to a minimum amount of information about individuals and view anything written as belonging to that person. Because of the experience of many mental health service users who have large files of information kept about them elsewhere, we are striving to reduce the amount of personal information on file and in computer with a view to reducing the likelihood of information (particularly out of date information) passing on which is not in the interest of that service user.

However, in order to function as an efficient service, a certain amount of information is kept to carry out advocacy arrangements. This information is overseen by the Advocacy Staff.

We also keep a certain amount of information to monitor the use of our service. This information is essential for the world outside of AdvoCard to justify the way we use our funding and to make clear what we do.

It is the responsibility of each volunteer who has completed an advocacy request to fill in our record sheet each time piece of work is completed.

This information is then collated on a project wide basis to tell us how many advocacy appointments were filled, how many hours volunteers gave their time to work for the project, what types of issues were dealt with, what type of advocacy work was done, etc. This information becomes the public information we use to promote and sustain the project.

All information should be written in a way that the service user can understand and also in a way that would be fair and non-judgemental.

The volunteer also records the time taken to meet that advocacy request which will include any preparation and follow up time in addition to travelling time.

Staff working with the volunteers should remind and support volunteers to complete their monitoring records after each advocacy experience.

However, it is helpful if volunteers take responsibility for ensuring that their recording work is completed and up to date.

Personal Details Please remember to let the office know if you move house or change your phone number, so that we always have up to date contact details for you. Similarly, please let us know if you are going on holiday/going to be unavailable for a time. This is allowed! However, it is helpful if we know, so that we can avoid frustration and confusion on both sides.

Arrangements for appointments - We often have to juggle arrangements

for many appointments here in the office. We try to be efficient but our recording and communication systems aren't perfect and at times we may forget to confirm an arrangement, or think that things have been agreed and confirmed when in fact you may be waiting for a final phone call.

If you have any doubts about an arrangement, or feel uncertain whether or not a meeting is to go ahead it would be really helpful if you could call the office to clarify, rather than assume its not happening because you haven't heard from us.

We realise that this puts some of the responsibility for arrangements on to you, but it will really help us out and avoid the occasional mix ups that happen.

Organising Advocacy Work - In order for AdvoCard staff to be able to organise advocacy appointments in as easy and straightforward a way as possible, it is extremely helpful to have up to date information about your availability for advocacy work.

Letting us know about when you are out of Edinburgh on holiday, about periods of ill health, about times when you are otherwise committed and want to withdraw from advocacy, about plans to move house, etc. can help the staff anticipate who is available and how to contact them at any particular time that advocacy requests come in.

Even with having specific information about each volunteer's availability, it is a huge task to keep all the details straight and accurate. You may find us contacting about advocacy work when in fact you have informed us that you are not available. We ask for your patience and understanding about such a contact and apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused.

Emergency Contacts – it is important that all volunteers keep us up to date with details of 2 people who can be contacted for them if an emergency arises. Please also keep us informed of any issues, health or otherwise, that it would be helpful to you for us to know about, so that we can support you effectively and appropriately in the course of your work.

And finally..... When You Stop Being An AdvoCard Volunteer

We accept that once we have you, we may not have you forever! There will come a time when you want to move on to pastures new. You may also find that you are pulled in other directions and therefore have to leave working with us. In any case, you will leave doing advocacy in AdvoCard behind. Obviously, we would be grateful if you would let us know of your departure at your earliest opportunity. This will help our own planning and organisation.

Before you do leave us, we would appreciate it if you would complete the Exit

Interview Questionnaire to describe your experience as a volunteer. This is an opportunity for you to feed back to us about how you have found the time of your association with the project. It may help us to improve the way we work with our volunteers.

Remember that a record of your time with us, in terms of training attended etc. is stored in this office and if you wish to take it with you, please ask for it. Some volunteers on leaving want to be kept informed of what is happening in AdvoCard. If you would like to remain on any of our databases to receive information about the project or events, please let us know.