

Our Volunteer Code

Introduction

From acting as relatable role models to young people to helping deliver epic robotics tournaments, volunteers are at the heart of our mission to make STEM less intimidating, more inclusive and diverse.

This policy outlines the core principles and values which we expect all our volunteers and staff to follow when volunteering.

It is reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the needs of our volunteers, organisation and the young people we work with. Thanks for helping build #morethanrobots.

Principles and Values

Every volunteer brings something unique to the FIRST UK community. Volunteering impacts not only our participants but also our staff, schools, youth organisations, communities and the volunteers themselves.

We value the time, diversity of lived experience and talents volunteers bring. We seek to create positive and meaningful experiences for all volunteers, placing them in roles that are safe, suitable, supported, and rewarding.

Definition

We refer to our volunteers as Game Changers - without them, our programmes simply could not happen.

Game Changers are supervised by, and work alongside, our HQ staff. They do not replace paid roles. Their efforts complement and enhance our work by creating additional capacity and expertise.

We provide role descriptions and training to ensure clear boundaries and expectations about volunteering with FIRST UK.

Volunteering Roles

Game Changers donate time, energy and skills to support our community by:

- Helping deliver events (robotics competitions)
- Appraising young people's performance (as judges)
- Mentoring teams in schools and youth groups
- Supporting teachers and other programme facilitators
- Acting as inspirational speakers
- Supporting the charity with ad hoc projects and pro bono expertise

Commitment

Volunteering with *FIRST* UK is flexible and based on mutual trust and respect. Volunteers offer their time without any contractual obligation, and there is no minimum commitment required. Similarly, while we strive to provide meaningful activities for volunteers, there is no obligation on the charity to assign regular tasks nor provide incentives or rewards.

Volunteer Coordination and Support

All Game Changers, including those under 18, will receive communications from our Programmes team, introducing a main point of contact. Those under 18 will receive extra support as appropriate to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable experience. If you have any questions or specific requirements related to volunteering, you can email gamechanger@firstuk.org or contact your designated HQ lead.

Volunteer recruitment and selection

FIRST UK is dedicated to equal opportunities and making volunteering accessible to everyone, regardless of background - read more on our approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion [here](#).

Game Changer roles are open to all, and the only criteria for selection are based on an individual's ability to perform the tasks involved.



We promote volunteering widely to reach all parts of our community, and we aim to find suitable roles which match our requirements and the skill set of the volunteer. Where a role isn't the right fit, we'll try and offer alternatives.

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Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is of paramount importance we ensure our programmes and events provide safe and impactful experiences for everyone who takes part (young people, volunteers, staff).

Every volunteer must read and understand our [safeguarding policy](#), and complete any training as requested by us. Occasionally, dependent upon the nature and frequency of volunteering, some roles may also need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Where this is required, you will be informed by FIRST UK and required to complete the necessary processes prior to taking up the volunteering position.

Safeguarding younger volunteers

Volunteering is typically reserved for adults (18 years plus). However, we recognise that as participants mature out of the programme (alumni) they may want to transition into Game Changer roles to continue their *FIRST* journey. Where FIRST UK permits volunteering by under 18s, we will:

- Require parental/guardian/carer consent
- Restrict the roles an under-18 volunteer is able to perform
- Ensure all duties and responsibilities are age-appropriate
- Provide enhanced supervision, training and support to the young volunteer

It is important to remember that alumni are safeguarded as young people until they turn 18.

Volunteers under the age of 18 must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times.



Training and development

The charity provides comprehensive training and development opportunities for all volunteers, which is regularly updated to ensure Game Changers can succeed in their roles. Training may be through in-person events, online webinars and via our online learning platform, Makerspace.

Expenses

Volunteering is an unremunerated position. All Game Changers will be provided with the tools and equipment needed to be an effective Game Changer. We aim for volunteering to happen locally (typically within 45 minutes of your home address) and we will provide meals and refreshments at events and reimburse reasonable expenses incurred as a direct result of your volunteering.

Expense approval

If an expense is likely to exceed £30, it must be pre-approved by the charity in writing, and if you are unable to or need support in booking your travel, please contact your HQ lead or contact us at gamechanger@firstuk.org. Here's how we handle expenses:

Travel by public transport

The main expense volunteers usually have is travel. We'll cover reasonable travel costs to and from your volunteer role. We ask that you book as early as possible and choose the best value option – such as public transport over driving if it's cheaper. For rail or air travel, we will only reimburse standard-class tickets.

Travel by car

If you're driving to and from your volunteer role, we'll reimburse you at 45p per mile, in line with [HMRC guidance](#) plus 14p per mile [for fuel](#). To make sure your claim is accurate, we ask that you use [RAC online tool](#) to calculate the mileage.

Accommodation

If you need accommodation for your volunteering, we'll typically book and cover the costs. If you need to book your own, we may approve it, but we ask that you get 3 quotes (one should include Premier Inn or Travelodge where available), and keep the cost under £150 per night, including breakfast.

Claims



To make sure we can reimburse your expenses, please submit your claim within 14 days of completing your volunteering, using the form provided by *FIRST* UK, making sure to include receipts or a screenshot of your mileage calculation. We aim to pay all claims within 2 weeks of receiving them. Unfortunately, we can't reimburse claims without receipts.

Insurance

Our liability insurance policies cover the activities of all volunteers, including those under 18. However, it does not cover personal possessions against loss or damage. Nor will the charity accept any claim for losses or damage incurred whilst volunteering and the volunteer indemnifies the Charity in respect of such.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be advised of the confidentiality policies relevant to their roles. Volunteers under 18 will receive additional guidance to ensure their understanding of confidentiality, especially where it concerns sensitive information.

Settling differences

FIRST UK aims to treat all volunteers fairly and consistently. If an issue arises, please inform your HQ lead, who will support you, or if the situation involves your HQ lead please contact our Head of Operations Vicky at Vicky@firstuk.org. For Game Changers who are under 18, parents or guardians may be involved if necessary to help resolve any issues.

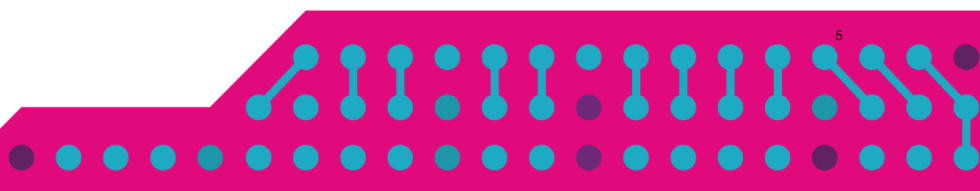
If you have a complaint or concern that you would like to address, please email complaints@firstuk.org. We are committed to resolving any issues in a fair and timely manner.

Our Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteers' Rights

As a Volunteer, you have the right to:

1. **Clear Expectations:** Know what is expected of you and what is not.
2. **Support:** Receive adequate support and guidance from *FIRST* UK.



3. **Appreciation:** Be recognised and appreciated for your contributions.
4. **Safety:** Volunteer in a safe and respectful environment.
5. **Insurance:** Be covered by FIRST UK's insurance during your role.
6. **Understanding:** Know your rights and responsibilities, including what to do if something goes wrong.
7. **Training:** Receive appropriate training to help you succeed in your role.
8. **Non-Discrimination:** Be free from discrimination in all forms.
9. **Personal Development:** Have access to opportunities for personal development.

Volunteers' Responsibilities

As a volunteer with *FIRST* UK, you are expected to:

1. **Be Reliable:** Commit to the role and carry out your tasks as agreed.
2. **Be a Gracious Professional:** Leading by example and treating everyone with respect, integrity, and kindness
3. **Respect Confidentiality:** Keep sensitive information confidential and share it only when necessary and appropriate.
4. **Take Initiative:** Make the most of training and support opportunities to improve your skills and knowledge.
5. **Follow Organisational Guidelines:** Carry out tasks in a way that reflects *FIRST* UK's values and mission.
6. **Respect the Organisation:** Act in a manner that upholds the reputation of *FIRST* UK, avoiding behaviour that could bring the organisation into disrepute.
7. **Adhere to Policies:** Follow all organisation policies, including safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

We value each volunteer's time, energy, and skills. By following our Volunteering Code you will ensure a positive and respectful environment for all.

Signed: 

Date: 13 Nov 2024

We are committed to reviewing our policies and good practices annually and/or when required by law.

| Date | Version | Policy Name | Approval Name |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| 13 Nov 2024 | V3 15-12-23 | Volunteer Policy | CEO |

