

Volunteer Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in FIRST UK (hereinafter referred to as ‘the organisation’). It is of relevance to all within the organisation, including volunteers, staff, members, and those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility. Volunteers are an integral part of the FIRST Tech Challenge UK programme (hereinafter referred to as ‘the challenge’), facilitating the opportunities of young people to engage with industry role models as team mentors and through event participation. Volunteers with the organisation serve two main functions; supporting teams of young people as mentors throughout a season of the challenge, and/or supporting the delivery of one-day events by undertaking a variety of key event roles and responsibilities.

This policy will be reviewed annually, to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of the organisation and its volunteers.

Commitment

The organisation acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique, and that volunteering can benefit our staff, the young people we serve, their schools and youth organisations, as well as the volunteers themselves.

The organisation greatly values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which are encouraging and supportive.

The organisation recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Definition

Volunteers are people who are unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the community. Volunteers for the organisation come from every walk of life, background and skill set, and the contributions of every volunteer is appreciated equally.

Statement of values and principles

Differences between volunteers and paid employees

Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by the organisation and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will not be used during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.

Mutual understanding of position

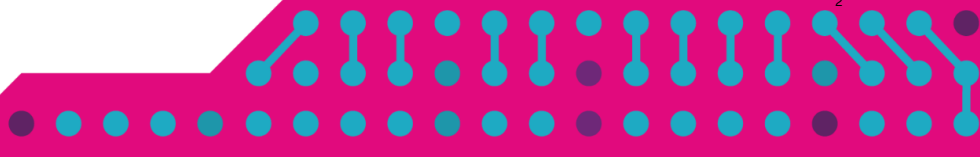
The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, the organisation cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

Volunteer Coordination

All volunteers will have a nominated member of staff or volunteer to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out tasks effectively. Volunteers will be informed of who to contact to receive support and supervision.

The nominated post holder with overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within the organisation is the Programme Officer, also known as our 'people manager'. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers.



Recruitment and selection process

The organisation is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups including children. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned, will be disregarded by the organisation in terms of recruitment and selection.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the organisation or referred to the nearest Volunteer Centre.

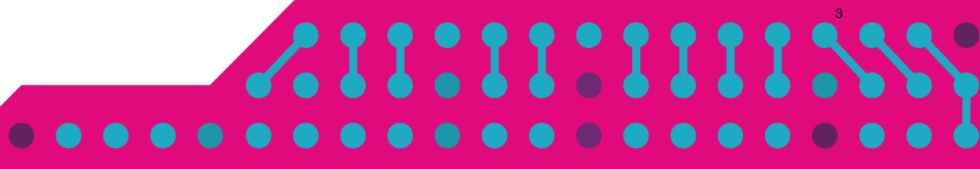
Volunteers will have a clear and concise task description, which will be subsequently reviewed every season of the challenge. The task description will be prepared in conjunction with the volunteer and the designated person referred to above.

New volunteers will be properly inducted into the organisation, through specific registration forms. Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence, including access to our online resource library Makerspace and regular email communication.

Safeguarding children and young people

We recognise that the welfare of all children is paramount and that all children and young people; regardless of ability or culture, have equal rights of safeguarding. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities. We will achieve this by adhering strictly to our Safeguarding Policy, guidance and risk assessments.

If the volunteer will be carrying out activities with children or young people where there is a chance that they may be unsupervised, they will be required to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check. More detailed information will be made available specific to legislative requirements and to the particular volunteer position. Please see the separate [Safeguarding Policy](#) for more details.



Training and development

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all the organisation's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, [privacy](#) and [safeguarding of young people](#).

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the organisation, in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. Every volunteer will be given access to our online learning platform, Makerspace, with specific documents and resources pertaining to their volunteering role. All other forms of training, including webinars, will be provided depending on the needs of the specific volunteering function. It will be the responsibility of the designated person referred to above to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to undertake their relevant training, including attending any training sessions.

Support, supervision and recognition

Volunteers will have a named person to whom they can take their volunteering concerns and seek guidance and support.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation's wider staff, at staff meetings etc.

A process will be developed in order to give formal recognition of the contribution of the organisation's volunteers (e.g. internal awards, articles in newspapers and newsletters, thank you letters etc.).

Expenses

Our expense policy applies equally to charity employees as it does volunteers. No one should miss out on the opportunity to volunteer because they can't afford it; the organisation wants to make sure as many people as possible can volunteer. As a charity, it's important that we're sensible with every pound we spend. Any volunteers claiming expenses are encouraged to try and find the most cost-effective method possible, without putting their safety or wellbeing at risk. Where an expense is likely to exceed £100 it must have been pre-approved by the charity in writing.

Travel by public transport

All event volunteers will be provided the relevant tools and equipment that they require for their role, as well as all meals during the event. The only out of pocket expenses



that volunteers typically incur are travel expenses. We will pay for reasonable travel costs to and from where people are volunteering. We ask volunteers to book as early as they can and to choose the best value option. This includes choosing public transport over a car, if it's cheaper. We will only reimburse travel by rail or air in standard class.

Travel by car

When volunteers drive to and from their volunteer roles, we will reimburse the cost at 45p per mile in accordance with [HMRC guidance](#) plus 14p per mile [for fuel](#). We ask that you use the [RAC online tool](#) to calculate your claim.

Accommodation

Where accommodation is required to support your volunteering it will typically be booked and paid for by the charity. Occasionally the Charity may approve you to book and pay for your own accommodation - where you do so, you must have obtained 3 comparative quotes (one of which must include Premier Inn or Travelodge where available) and must not exceed £150 per night including breakfast.

Claims

In order for volunteer expenses to be reimbursed, you must submit a claim within 14 days of completing your volunteering.

Claims must be submitted using the form provided to you by the Charity. Receipts or a screenshot of the mileage calculation must be uploaded as supporting evidence.

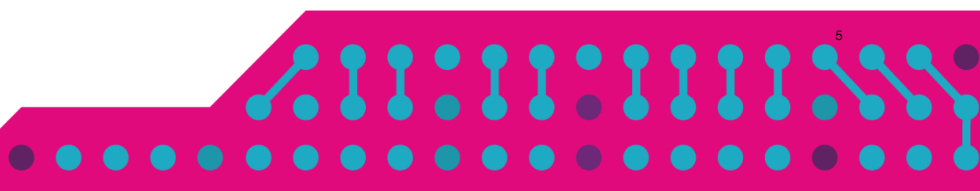
The charity endeavours to pay all expenses within 2 weeks of receiving a claim. Claims without receipts will not be paid.

Insurance

The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. The organisation does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

Confidentiality

The organisation will advise the volunteer on its confidentiality policy and procedures, where relevant. This would include those relating to personal information held by the organisation relating to the volunteer.



Settling differences

The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The organisation seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences.

The designated officer referred to above is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct and these should be referred to him/her. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by the organisation to the volunteer while it endeavours to resolve the problem in an informal manner. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role, or to leave the organisation.

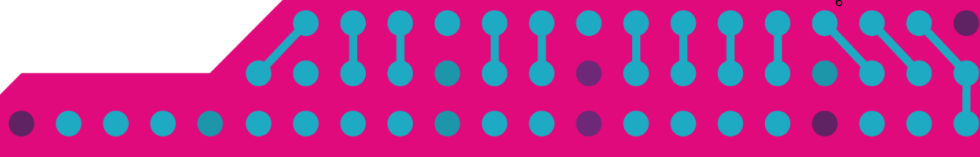
Rights and responsibilities

The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- have adequate support in their volunteering
- receive appreciation
- volunteer in a safe environment
- be insured
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- receive appropriate training
- be free from discrimination
- be offered the opportunity for personal development

The organisation expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- comply with the organisation's policies



Signed:



Date: 09 Jan 2024

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

Date	Version	Policy Name	Approval Name
09 Jan 2024	V3 15-12-23	Volunteer Policy	CEO

