Volunteer Code

Introduction

In line with our mission FIRST UK seeks to engage volunteers to:

- ensure we meet the needs of participants, volunteers, partners and supporters
- provide new skills and perspectives
- increase our contact with the local community we serve.

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.

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.

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.

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.

By following our Volunteering Code, you will ensure a positive and respectful environment for all.

Purpose of the policy

Our Volunteer Policy has been created to inform our volunteers and prospective volunteers how they will be selected, engaged, inducted and trained by FIRST UK.

This policy also outlines what support is available to volunteers and what volunteers can expect in return from FIRST UK.

Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all volunteers and prospective volunteers, including Trustees. It does not apply to employees, self-employed contractors, casual or agency workers.

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.

Attracting volunteers

FIRST UK has a range of opportunities available for potential volunteers, which can be found on our website and are also advertised and promoted via third-party channels. Prospective volunteers are invited to complete a short registration form expressing their interest.

Once we receive the expression of interest form, FIRST UK will assess any potential fit with the individual's time availability, interests, skills and experience with existing volunteering opportunities. If appropriate, it provides follow up information, including accessing training opportunities, safeguarding and details on any next steps.

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 to offer alternatives.

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.

Engaging volunteers

Some volunteer roles will require a criminal records check permitted by law. FIRST UK will inform prospective volunteers if this will be required for the volunteer role(s) which they are interested in carrying out and will advise them of the process which needs to be followed for the relevant check to be conducted.

Volunteers engaged by FIRST UK enter into an online Volunteer Agreement detailing their obligations as a volunteer, what they are committing to, and their adherence to our safeguarding policies, volunteering code of conduct and broader expectations around their volunteering.

The Volunteer Agreement is not intended to be a legally binding contract and does not create any employment relationship between FIRST UK and the volunteer.

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 or 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. They will meet with volunteers on a regular basis to discuss how they are getting on, discuss any training needs and deal with issues arising. This will also ensure that FIRST UK are doing all we can to make the volunteering experience an enjoyable and meaningful one.

Those under 18 may receive extra support as appropriate from their HQ lead to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable experience.

If you have questions or specific requirements related to volunteering, please contact your HQ lead or email gamechanger@firstuk.org.

Training and development

The charity provides comprehensive training and development opportunities for all volunteers, which are 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.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is of paramount importance that 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 before 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.

Expenses

FIRST UK values our volunteers and wants to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All Game Changers will be provided with the tools and equipment needed to be an effective Game Changer. Reasonable out of pocket expenses, if required, will be reimbursed, including expenses for travel and meals when volunteering for at least one full day.

Expense claims must be submitted within 14 days of completing your volunteering, using the form provided by us, including receipts or a screenshot of any mileage calculation.

- We cannot reimburse claims without receipts
- Expenses can only be paid into a bank account in the name of the volunteer
- Claims for meals and sustenance cannot exceed £25 in any single day
- Mileage will only be repaid using the HMRC approved per mile amount
- Travel exceeding £30 must be pre-approved by the charity in writing

For advice and support with expenses, selecting appropriate travel, or if you have any queries, contact gamechanger@firstuk.org.

Travel by public transport
We'll cover reasonable travel costs to and from your volunteer role. We ask that you book travel as early as possible and choose the best value option. The cheapest and most convenient mode will often be by public transport in standard class, using cheaper advance fares, and fare-splitting where possible.

The charity only ever reimburses standard-class travel. We use commonly available websites such as Trainline and Skyscanner to determine if you have made an appropriate travel selection and the value of your claim is reasonable.

Where we discover a cheaper, acceptable fare which would have got you to and from your destination in time to complete your volunteering duties, we reserve the right to only reimburse the cost of that fare regardless of any claim.

Travel by car
If you're driving to and from your volunteer role, we'll reimburse you 55p per mile in line with HMRC guidance. To make sure your claim is accurate, we ask that you use RAC online tool to calculate the mileage.

Taxis
You may not claim for taxis without prior approval from the charity. This will only be granted if the use of the taxi is pooled (multiple volunteers), cheaper or equivalent to public transport, or where the journey is short (<£10), for example from a railway station to a nearby volunteering location.

Accommodation
If you need accommodation for your volunteering, we'll typically book and cover the costs. We may approve (in advance) you booking your own, where we do, you will be expected to provide 3 quotes (one should include Premier Inn or Travelodge where available), and keep the cost under £125 per night, including breakfast.

Prior approval

Most single day volunteering commitments are expected to be local and as such the combined travel and food costs would not be expected to exceed £30.

For national volunteering and training opportunities, travel is likely to be more.

Where the sum (travel & food) of any single day volunteering expense is likely to exceed £50, it must be pre-approved by the charity in writing by contacting us at gamechanger@firstuk.org.

Resolving problems

FIRST UK is committed to ensuring that all volunteers are part of a respectful, safe, and positive environment. When concerns or disputes arise, they will be handled promptly, fairly, and with appropriate confidentiality.

If a volunteer has any concerns or issues whilst volunteering with us, they should normally raise these in the first instance with any FIRST UK staff member.

If the concern relates to the staff member or if, after discussion remains unresolved, the volunteer should contact complaints@firstuk.org.

Where FIRST UK has concerns about a volunteer's conduct, performance, or adherence to policies, the main point of contact will discuss the concerns with the volunteer so they can understand the issue and share their perspective. Wherever possible, concerns will be addressed informally through conversation, guidance, or additional training. If the matter is serious, or if it cannot be resolved informally, a formal meeting will be arranged. The volunteer will be able to have a support person present. This process may result in additional training, a change of role, a written warning, or in some cases, termination of the volunteer arrangement. In situations

where there is a safety risk or a serious breach of policy, such as discrimination or harassment, the organisation may suspend or end the volunteer role immediately. Any FIRST UK member of staff holds the authority to suspend or end the volunteer arrangement.

In all cases, disputes will be handled in a respectful and fair way for everyone involved. Each party will have the opportunity to present their side of the story before any decision is made, and matters will be addressed without unreasonable delay.

For Game Changers who are under 18, parents or guardians may be involved as necessary to help resolve any issues.

Complaints or concerns can be raised verbally to any FIRST UK staff member or in writing to complaints@firstuk.org. We are committed to resolving any issues in a fair and timely manner.

Insurance, health and safety, accidents and risk assessment

FIRST UK has a valid insurance policy so that volunteers are covered by public liability insurance. This does not include the use of personal vehicles, contents or belongings.

When using your own vehicle to attend a volunteering opportunity, you must ensure that you hold the correct, valid driving licence, are medically fit, and hold appropriate insurance and MoT for the vehicle and that it is roadworthy.

Our insurance 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.

We aim to provide a safe working environment for all volunteers, employees, contractors and those who visit our premises. Volunteers are asked to familiarise themselves with our Health and Safety Policy and to comply with all of its requirements, a copy of which is available on request.

Data Protection

FIRST UK collects and processes certain types of data about volunteers and does so in line with data protection legislation. Volunteers are required to read our Privacy Notice for volunteers, which is provided separately for more information about the types of data processed and the reasons for processing.

Volunteers shall be required to make themselves aware of FIRST UK data protection policies and procedures and undertake to act in accordance with these at all times, including exercising reasonable care in keeping safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information. Volunteers should inform any FIRST UK staff member immediately or write to gamechanger@firstuk.org upon discovery of a data breach.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected to adhere to confidentiality guidelines, which will be provided separately, this also includes the use of social media. 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.

Equality & Diversity

All volunteers will be treated in accordance with FIRST UK's Equal Opportunities Policy, a copy of which is available on request. When representing FIRST UK volunteers are expected to support our commitment to promoting equality and recognising diversity.

Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will take effect from 30 November 2025. The CEO has responsibility for monitoring this policy. 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.