

VOLUNTEER POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Disability in Camden (DISC)'s mission statement is to work towards the establishment of a society in which there are equal opportunities for all disabled people. A society in which disabled people have the right to control their own life, share in the opportunities, enjoyment, challenges and responsibilities of everyday living.

Our objectives are:

- Provision of a specialist advice service for disabled people, carers and workers in the statutory and voluntary sectors through a telephone advice service and face to face sessions with advice workers who will advocate on users behalf or assist in promoting self advocacy.
- Provision of a direct payment support service to give advice, information, support and training to recipients of direct payments.
- To contribute the views of Camden disabled people towards the development and establishment of a Centre for Independent Living.
- Provision of an extensive disability information system and newsletters.
- Provision of a cassette reading/recording/copying service, large print and Braille production enabling groups and individuals to make information accessible to blind and partially sighted people.
- Representing the interests of Camden disabled people through representation and consultation.
- Acting as an umbrella organisation to a network of disability groups within Camden. Providing information, support organisational assistance and co-ordinating responses on disability issues.

Our Values:

1. Disability in Camden exists to provide facilities for voluntary bodies in the London Borough of Camden working for the welfare of Deaf/disabled people and/or people with long-term health problems; to provide advice, support and facilities for disabled people and/or people with long-term health problems, and their carers; and to increase awareness within the community about the needs of disabled people or people with long term health problems, and the discrimination they face.
2. Underlying all the work of Disability in Camden is a belief that all people are equal and have a right to expect a decent quality of life. It is also our belief that the quality of life of everyone would be enhanced in a society which did not seek to separate out disabled people or people with long-term health problems but, instead, did everything humanly possible to ensure proper integration.
3. Disability in Camden is committed to trying to bring about such a society - a community where disabled people and people with long-term health problems have real choices, where they can genuinely participate in all aspects of society, where they have control over their own lives, and where they are able to organise for themselves rather than having to accept the organisation and decisions of others.
4. Disability in Camden is opposed to discrimination, prejudice, and oppression in all its forms. We wish to see a society where equal opportunities is a reality and to that end we have committed ourselves to pursuing equal opportunities objectives in our delivery of services, the structure of our Management Committee and the recruitment of staff.
5. Within Disability in Camden, the way we organise ourselves and the way we respond to users is very important. We believe that Disability in Camden should demonstrate through its own practice, the attitudes and principles we urge others to follow. We therefore seek to work with people with disabilities and/or long-term health problems rather than just for them; to be welcoming and accessible at all times; to provide support and encouragement for all-comers; to be ready to speak out against discrimination and lend support to campaigns for just treatment; to encourage the involvement of people with disabilities and/or long-term health problems in all levels of work and decision making; to promote the idea of partnership and joint work between disabled people or people with long-term health problems and non-disabled people; and, most of all, we try never to lose sight of the fact that everyone has an important contribution to make and everyone has the right to a full life.
6. Disability is not something which can affect only some people in society. Anyone can acquire a disability through an accident, illness, or age and it is likely that at some stage everyone will experience disability (or the consequences of long-term health problems) directly or through a member of her/his family or group of friends. Disability in Camden is concerned, therefore, to promote an awareness of what disability is and means throughout all sections of the community in Camden and to encourage the active participation of everyone in overcoming the difficulties faced by disabled people and people with long-term health problems.

DISC is a voluntary organisation controlled by, and accountable to, disabled people in Camden and volunteers are at the heart of its structure - as trustees, committee members and workers. The contribution of volunteers to the work of DISC is especially valued and respected.

Volunteers increase our capacity to fulfil our mission statement and deliver on our objectives. They keep the organisation in touch with our purpose and provide a wide range of relevant skills and perspectives that improve the work we do.

This policy, which is supported by our volunteers, sets out how DISC intends to support its volunteers.

TYPES OF VOLUNTEER

DISC recognises three different types of volunteers.

Occasional Volunteers

These are people who volunteer at events such as Disability Equality/Awareness seminars or Campaign issues or help with projects, for example by helping with monitoring a particular project or joining the steering group of a particular project. They volunteer occasionally, perhaps a few times a year.

Regular Volunteers

These are people who take on a particular task, on an ongoing basis. Regular volunteers include those undertaking administrative work to enable DISC fulfil its mission.

Trustees and committee members

These people hold positions of responsibility and have been elected by members of the organisation or selected on the basis of their skills and experience.

PRINCIPLES

The volunteer policy is guided by the following principles:

- The organisation and its volunteers will follow this policy.
- All regular volunteers, Trustees and committee members will sign the volunteer agreement.
- The organisation recognises that volunteers donate their time. Their contribution should be mutually agreed.
- The volunteer's role will be clearly explained and mutually agreed.
- The organisation will provide induction, information, training and support to its volunteers appropriate to their volunteer role.
- The organisation will, whenever possible, give volunteers work that is satisfying and appropriate to their interest.
- Volunteers have the right to express their views within the organisational structure.
- Volunteers and staff will work together within the organisation's rules, policies and procedures.
- Volunteers and staff will treat each other with respect and courtesy.
- The organisation is committed to equal opportunities in relation to the recruitment, selection and involvement of volunteers.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

DISC is committed to good practice when supporting its volunteers. For more detailed information on how the organisation supports volunteers, see the Volunteer Induction Pack.

Recruitment

DISC will make ongoing efforts to recruit volunteers who match appropriate needs. This selection process will be based on the skills and interest of the volunteer and the current needs of the organisation.

Volunteer agreement and work outline

Regular volunteers, trustees and committee members will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement outlining the commitment and expectations of DISC and the role or specific tasks that the volunteer has offered to undertake. A representative of DISC will also sign this agreement. The agreement is by no means a contract; it is simply a guideline to help the volunteer feel supported and clearer about their responsibilities. Volunteers will also receive a copy of the Volunteer Induction Pack to keep and refer to when necessary.

Induction, information and training

Volunteers will receive an appropriate induction, which will include information on the aims, background and organisational framework of the organisation. Additional information will be provided to help the volunteer in their work. DISC will strive to make the information sessions accessible and relevant to local needs. Opportunities to develop knowledge and skills will also be provided as appropriate.

Support and Supervision

Volunteers will be supported and supervised by a named contact person who may be a member of staff or another volunteer. This person will provide the volunteer with feedback on their work, the opportunity to discuss future work and a chance to discuss any issues that may arise.

Health and Safety

DISC will, as far as is practical, care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with copies of relevant health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training.

Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed travel and other approved expenses when allowed by DISC's Expenses Policy. To claim expenses, supporting receipts must be provided.

Having a voice

Volunteers will be given opportunities to express their views about issues concerning the organisation and its work. You can also give us feedback through your appointed supervisor.

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the organisation's insurance policy while engaged in approved work for DISC.

Equal opportunities

All volunteers are required to make a commitment to equal opportunities. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of DISC's equal opportunities policy and will be supported in its practice.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and follow its principles.

Volunteers will have access to personal information about some individuals. Some volunteers will also hold information about, for example, financial and personnel matters. The organisation needs to be able to trust its volunteers with such information, which is confidential. However, volunteers suspecting mistreatment or abuse of a volunteer, staff member or service users should discuss the matter with their supervisor. This person will make an informed decision on what needs to be done.

Resolving concerns

DISC aims to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage. A Grievance Procedure has been drawn up for dealing with complaints by volunteers. Where the actions of a volunteer warrant serious concern, the Disciplinary Procedure may be used and appropriate action taken. Copies of these procedures can be found in the Volunteer Induction Pack.

Approved by **Staff and Finance Sub-Committee**