



# Brighton and Hove Speak Out

## Code of Practice for Volunteers

### Speak Out aims to:

- Support people with a learning disability living in Brighton and Hove to speak up and be heard or show others what is important to them.
- Protect their rights and interests
- Help to break down the barriers that prevent people with a learning disability from living a full and satisfying life.

Volunteers play a very important part in helping Speak Out to do its work and achieve this aim. This code has been written to make sure that all volunteer opportunities at Speak Out are part of making this happen. Brighton and Hove Speak Out expects volunteers to work within this code. This code also explains what volunteers can expect from the organisation and Speak Out staff.

As well as benefiting people with learning disabilities, we want volunteers to enjoy and get the most out of volunteering with us. We believe that providing the right support will help make this happen.

By being a Speak Out volunteer, you are agreeing to follow the aims and practice outlined in this code.

### **This code of practice applies to all volunteer roles at Speak Out, including:**

- Management Committee Members
- Community Champions
- Advocacy Group Volunteers
- Volunteers at the Drop-in
- Community Connecting volunteers
- Citizen and Community Advocates
- Other volunteer roles including admin and marketing, support at events, meetings etc

See separate 'Code of Practice for Advocates'

# **Volunteer Code of Practice**

## **1. Clarity of purpose**

Speak Out volunteers will work within a given role description and ensure that service users are clear about the support a volunteer can offer within their role and the limitations. They should not act outside the boundaries of their role. If volunteers are unclear about this they should discuss it with a staff member.

## **2. Independence**

Speak Out is an independent advocacy organisation. Volunteers should maintain their independent status and act in the best interests of service users whilst respecting the role of relatives and other support staff working with Speak Out services users.

Volunteers should take all appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest occurring in their work with service users. If a volunteer is unsure what to do because of a 'conflict of interest' they should contact the Speak Out staff for support and advice. A conflict of interest form should be completed. A Speak Out manager or Project Lead will assess the situation and an appropriate plan of action will be taken. Refer to Conflict of Interest Policy and Volunteer Policy for more information.

## **3. Putting people first**

Volunteers working for Speak Out will treat service users with dignity and respect at all times. Volunteers should ensure support provided to service users is appropriate to their needs and/or expressed wishes within the boundaries of their volunteer role.

## **4. Empowerment**

When supporting people with learning disabilities volunteers should always strive to work in an empowering way, and where possible support people to do things for themselves, rather than for them. If situations arise where a volunteer feels unsure how to act, they should talk to their project manager first. If they are not available, they should speak to a Speak Out staff member

## **5. Equal Opportunities**

Speak Out is committed to equal opportunities and believes that everyone should be treated fairly and without discrimination regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability. Volunteers must make themselves familiar with and work in accordance with Speak Out's Equality and Diversity Policy (this is provided as part of their induction). Volunteers must make every effort to provide support to others so that no-one is excluded because of our class, colour, ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability.

## **6. Accessibility**

Volunteers should make every effort to ensure they communicate with service users in a way that is accessible and understandable to them.

Volunteers may, in some instances, need to undergo additional training in their role to support certain service users e.g. sign language, inclusive communication, objects of reference. Speak Out are signed up to Brighton and Hove's Inclusive Communication Charter details of which can be found on our website.

Volunteers should consider general access needs when supporting service users to make arrangements or planning meetings or events.

## **7. Safety**

Risk assessment must be completed for any new activity with service users to ensure the safety of volunteers, staff and the service user. It is the role of Speak Out staff to carry out risk assessments and ensure volunteers are aware of any risks and follow any guidelines that arise from the risk assessment.

All volunteers must follow the Speak Out's 'Lone Working Policy' and should not knowingly place themselves in any situation which may compromise their personal safety.

Volunteers will be insured by Speak Out's Employer's Liability Insurance. A copy of the insurance certificate is displayed at the Speak Out Office.

It is not Speak Out's policy to expect volunteers to transport service users in their own vehicles. If volunteers feel there are circumstances where this is applicable they should discuss this with their line manager prior to any agreement with a service user (also see 'Car Safety Policy'). Volunteers are responsible for checking with their own insurers for guidelines on using their vehicle in relation to their volunteering role.

## **8. Supporting Volunteers**

Volunteers must be prepared to undertake appropriate training and receive ongoing support and supervision from Speak Out staff.

The nature and frequency of supervision will be agreed with volunteers individually and will vary depending on their experience and the issues they are working with in their specific role. Supervision should provide volunteers with the opportunity for reflection and analysis of their own practice.

Volunteers can claim 'reasonable and appropriate out of pocket' expenses by completing and submitting a claim form each month. If in the course of their role they believe there is a need to purchase items to fulfil their duties, then this must be discussed with the Project Lead or Volunteer Co-ordinator in advance and written permission will need to be given by Speak Out beforehand.

## **9. Accountability**

It is important that all volunteers do what has been agreed to. If this is not possible they must phone Speak Out as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made. If a volunteer is unable to attend a pre-arranged meeting external to Speak Out they must inform other parties in good time.

Volunteers should inform their Project Lead as soon as possible with regards to any holiday being taken.

Volunteers are asked to make a commitment of a minimum of 6 months volunteering for Speak Out. However, if circumstances change at any time and a volunteer is no longer able to maintain this commitment they must contact Speak Out staff to discuss the situation immediately. It is requested that volunteers who intend to leave provide as much advance notice as possible. Speak Out will then make plans to cover the role with minimal impact to service users.

Volunteers should conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner in all dealings with service users, carers and other service workers. If a dispute does arise, it should be referred to the volunteer's line manager at the earliest opportunity.

Volunteers must not make any commitment that they cannot fulfil and should be clear with service users about the limitations of their role.

Volunteers should never do the following:

- Handle service users' money
- Enter into any financial transactions with service users e.g. make loans etc.
- Borrow money or accept gifts from service users. Volunteers should speak to their line manager if a situation occurs where it would cause offence if a gift were not accepted (see Speak Out's Receiving Gifts policy).

On occasions, volunteers will be in the public eye as a Speak Out volunteer. Volunteers should represent the organisation positively and not speak on behalf of the organisation unless given permission to do so by a Speak Out staff member.

## **10. Recording Information**

In some roles volunteers will need to keep records of activity. In such cases they should follow Speak Out's Case Management Guidelines and keep accurate and up to date written records of action taken and progress made with their work.

Volunteers should comply with the Speak Out's Data Collection Policy and the Data Protection Act and ensure any service user information is kept securely and monitoring information is routinely collected and fed back to the organisation.

Service users can request to see any information that is recorded by staff or volunteers about them. Service users can request a copy of that information at any time. Information relating to the advocacy partnership will be kept for two years after completion of the work and thereafter will be destroyed in accordance with our data protection policy.

## **11. Confidentiality**

In the course of their work at Speak Out volunteers may hear many people's stories and personal information. Any personal information given to volunteer by or about a service user will remain confidential unless the volunteer is asked by the service users to disclose the information to others. A volunteer will **only** disclose information to others without permission if there is a strong belief that the service user is in danger of harm or could harm others. In such instances the volunteer will first let the service user know what information is to be disclosed and why (see Speak Out's Confidentiality Policy).

Volunteers should be honest with service users about the level of confidentiality they can realistically guarantee. This means explaining any conditions under which confidentiality may be breached (e.g. harm to self or others, abuse) and the means by which this may occur. Speak Out will be responsible for providing the service user with our accessible confidentiality policy at the outset of any advocacy partnership. Copies of this are also available at Speak Out self-advocacy groups and drop-in.

If a volunteer suspects a service user has been abused, financially, physically, emotionally or sexually a safe guarding alert should be made. Volunteers should discuss their concerns with a Speak Out staff member first if possible.

Volunteers should be familiar with the guidelines produced by Brighton and Hove Adult Services on 'Safeguarding Adults at Risk' (provided during their induction). Volunteers should follow these guidelines in responding to suspected abuse. Speak Out is signed up to Sussex Multi Agency Safeguarding Policy.

A volunteer's personal details will never be shared with service users or their carer's/service providers.

## **12. Complaints**

Service users should be supported to give feedback about their experience at Speak Out. They should know how to complain if they are unhappy with support they are given.

Volunteers may need to share information about Speak Out's Comments and Complaints procedure with service users. This will involve giving service users a copy of Speak Out's accessible Comments and Complaints leaflet; explaining the various stages of the complaints process to them at the start and during the course of the relationship; and being open to criticism about themselves or others in the organisation without becoming defensive.

Any complaints received by volunteers in the course of their work, whether verbal or written, should be passed on to their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

**Speak Out expects Volunteers to:**

- Stay in contact
- Take part in supervision
- Stick to the code of practice
- Attend at least 3 Advocacy Forums or Volunteer team meetings per annum
- Attend at least one training event to improve volunteers skills and the quality of volunteering
- Be aware of issues that may be relevant to their role

**I have read, understood and agree to work in accordance with Brighton and Hove Speak Out's Code of Practice for Volunteers**

**Signed (volunteer) .....**

**Print Name.....Date.....**

**Signed (Speak Out staff) .....**

**Print name.....Date.....**

If volunteers for any reason do not act with in this code of practice this will be addressed in the first instance in supervision. In situations of need, corrective action may be taken following supervision. Examples of corrective action include the requirement for additional training, close monitoring of work or ending the volunteer position (See Volunteer Policy).

Volunteers who continue to not adhere to the rules and procedures laid out within their Code of Practice, or who fail to perform their volunteer work may be asked to finish volunteering at Speak Out. No volunteer will be asked to leave without the opportunity to discuss the reasons with their project lead or Volunteer Coordinator.

This code will be reviewed annually.

## **What volunteers can expect from Speak Out staff**

- 1.** Volunteers will be provided with induction training as appropriate in order to help prepare for their role.
  
- 2.** Speak Out staff will provide ongoing training, support and advice. The form and frequency of this support will be negotiated between Speak Out staff and the volunteers.
  
- 3.** Speak Out staff will help volunteers work out their own training needs and seek to meet these. Training may take place in workshops, or 1:1 and may be provided by Speak Out or appropriate external agencies.
  
- 4.** Speak Out will ensure that volunteers are insured in the following areas:
  - Professional indemnity
  - Public liability
  - Personal accident
  
- 5.** Speak Out staff welcome and will seek feedback about the effectiveness of all aspects of the Speak Out scheme. If volunteers have specific comments or complaints that they wish to make confidentially, then they should use Brighton and Hove Speak Out's 'Comments and Complaints procedure'.
  
- 6.** Speak Out aims to make volunteering both a 'profitable', rewarding and enjoyable experience. Therefore, if you would like us to supply you with a reference for a job application, we are happy to do so.
  
- 7.** Volunteers are entitled to seek reasonable reimbursement for travel expenses and refreshments if required.
  
- 8.** Volunteers will be invited to Speak Out's socials and events which occur throughout the year.
  
- 9.** On leaving the project volunteers may be offered an exit interview and opportunity to feedback about their experience as a Speak Out volunteer and Speak Out's work generally.

**10.** All staff will recognise the valuable contribution that the volunteers make to Speak Out's projects. Opportunities for recognition will take place throughout the year as appropriate.



## **Relevant Policies**

### **Confidentiality policy**

Speak Out's Confidentiality Policy will be provided and discussed during induction training.

### **Safeguarding Adults and Young People at risk**

A copy of the policy and guidance notes for 'Safeguarding Adults and Young People at Risk' will be provided and talked through during volunteer induction training.

### **Equality and Diversity Policy**

Brighton and Hove Speak Out is committed to actively opposing all forms of discrimination. Speak Out intends to ensure that equality of opportunity becomes a reality throughout its work, and the work of all its services and projects.

### **Expenses Policy**

#### Travel Expenses - Public Transport

Speak Out expects volunteers to make use of public transport where it is available, unless its use results in considerable inconvenience, expense or if it is not a viable option due to disability.

When using any form of public transport without a voucher a receipt/ticket must be obtained before a reimbursement can be made.

#### Use of own car

Mileage can be claimed for work related journeys. Volunteers must check that their insurance covers them to use their car for volunteering purposes

#### Other expenses

Some other reasonable expenses incurred can be claimed with prior agreement from the Volunteer Coordinator or Project lead.

### **Health & Safety Policy**

The health, safety and welfare of staff, volunteers and visitors are of the utmost importance. Health and Safety information relevant to volunteer roles will be shared during volunteer induction training, including Speak Out's 'Lone Working Policy'. The responsibility for maintaining a safe working environment is a joint effort involving the Speak Out's management team as well as all members of the staff and volunteers working at Speak Out.

*The full 'Health & Safety Policy' is available from the Speak Out office.*

### **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

Speak Out aims to provide high quality services that meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.

In order to ensure our services remain at a high and improving standard, we have a procedure through which volunteers can let us know of for any reason they are not satisfied with their dealings with the organisation. If they are not happy with Speak Out please we invite them to tell us.

*The full 'Complaints Policy & Procedure' is available from the Speak Out office.*

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

As an advocacy charity it is vital for Speak Out to maintain the independence of its advocacy services.

A conflict of interest arises when either it is not possible to give independent and impartial advocacy to a service user for a particular reason or where Speak Out, its projects and/or any individual member staff or volunteer at speak Out, are seen as not being able to give independent and impartial information or advocacy support.

For advocacy to be independent there must be no factor influencing the support given to an individual client other than that of the client's best interests. Speak Out, its projects and/or any individual member staff or volunteer could have a significant personal interest in the outcome of an advocacy case or support given. Any potential conflict of interest should be raised with the project lead, volunteer coordinator or Speak Out manager.

*The full 'Conflict of Interest Policy' is available from the Speak Out office.*