

## **ACTION 21 VOLUNTEERS POLICY**

*An **Action 21 volunteer** is a person who gives time and talent free of charge to advance the mission of Action 21, who makes a commitment and is accountable to the organisation and who is entitled to regular supervision, training and support offered by paid staff of Action 21.*

*Volunteers act with respect for the beneficiaries of the project and for the community.*

**Volunteer involvement mutually benefits both the volunteer and the organisation.**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

At Action 21 we believe that volunteering should be accessible to all and that everybody has a right to volunteer. Action 21 intends to ensure that equality of opportunity is afforded to all volunteers.

No volunteers will be discriminated against or disadvantaged in the recruiting and retaining process, training or in the provisions of services, on the grounds of age, gender, cultural or religious beliefs, different abilities, marital status, racial origins or sex orientation, physical challenges, class, employment status and HIV status. We will endeavour to install and maintain a positive working environment where no volunteer feels under threat or intimidated. Breaches of the policy will lead to a disciplinary investigation and possible disciplinary action.

### **THEME GROUPS**

The theme groups offer a space for people from the local community to get together and raise, discuss and take action on issues around food, energy, transport and recycling.

All people that join the theme groups are members of the theme groups. When they join the group the group coordinator welcomes them and introduces them to the group and the projects the group is working on.

They can become Action 21 members and the group coordinator will make sure that they are registered.

When they express an interest in developing a particular project they will be recruited as volunteers. As volunteers all the rights and responsibilities will apply.

### **VOLUNTEERS RECRUITMENT**

Volunteers are recruited directly through Action 21 and through the Recycle Warehouse. Volunteers are also recruited via the Council of Voluntary Service (CVS), Connexions and other bodies.

Volunteering opportunities are advertised widely, in a way that is accessible to all members of the community. The publicity indicates what volunteers can gain from being involved as well as what they'll be required to do.

### **INTERVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS**

A comprehensive selection process ensures that all prospective volunteers complete an application form and are invited for an interview which takes the form of an informal chat - an interview meeting with the Volunteer Development Worker. It is important that all prospective volunteers are given the opportunity to explore whether their time availability and skills match the requirements of Action 21.

The prospective volunteer is invited to visit the Recycle Warehouse and to attend the theme group meetings, to meet other volunteers, Action 21 members and staff. Provided that the Volunteer Development Worker considers the prospective volunteer to have the necessarily skills for the area of work they are interested in, and the volunteer wishes to work with us, a volunteer agreement will be signed.

Prospective volunteers will be asked to provide the name of one referee to assist with the selection process. Apart from close family, a referee can be any person who has known the prospective volunteer for a reasonable period of time and who knows them well. Once references have been received a start date will be agreed.

When it is considered that we can not offer a volunteer suitable role at Action21, the prospective volunteer will be informed. Where appropriate it will be suggested that they contact the Council of Voluntary Service, where they may be able to explore alternative avenues.

### **VOLUNTEERS INDUCTION**

All new volunteers should receive an induction programme to familiarise themselves with:

- The activities of Action 21
- The people involved in Action 21
- The workplace
- Health and safety
- Action21's Volunteers Policies

### **PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

There will be a probation period of four weeks, or four working sessions to ascertain whether the volunteer is suitable to work within the team. This will be established by the volunteers' supervisor, through working with and supporting the volunteer and in consultation with the Volunteer Development Worker.

### **REVIEW AND ONGOING SUPPORT**

Following the probation period, the volunteer will meet regularly with the Volunteer Development Worker at a mutually agreed time to examine the volunteer's satisfaction and development. All volunteers at the Recycle Warehouse are supervised by the Recycle Warehouse Manager. A work area supervisor is nominated for most volunteering roles. The supervisors are members of Action 21 staff.

All volunteers should be offered equal access to ongoing support and supervision on a regular basis with the Volunteer Development Worker. This should provide volunteers with the opportunity to:

- Reflect on/share volunteer experiences
- Share/discuss problems that have arisen
- Evaluate what they are learning in terms of skills gained
- Renegotiate any areas of work they wish to develop, expand or change
- Discuss potential training opportunities.

## **WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM US**

While they don't receive a wage for their service, volunteers do receive multiple benefits from working for our organisation:

- Volunteers can expect payment of agreed travel expenses to and from the work place
- Tea, coffee or other beverages whilst engaging in volunteer work
- Relevant training
- References, if required for a job application or any other reason
- Support and supervision according to their role

## **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

There is no intention for this to be a legally binding document, nor is there any intention to enter into a legally binding relationship. The sole purpose of the volunteer agreement is to clarify the agreement between Action 21 and our volunteers: the volunteers' duties and time arrangements.

## **COMPLAINTS**

Any volunteer may report a grievance in accordance with the Grievance Procedure for the Volunteers.

If there are any complaints against the volunteer then the Volunteer Development Worker will discuss the matter with the volunteer and a written record will be kept. A volunteer will have the right to appeal in case of any complaints made against them.

## **TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT**

We hope that all volunteers will find working with us an enriching experience. However any of the following actions will result in the volunteer being asked to leave by the Project Manager:

- Theft of property belonging to Action 21, another volunteer, a paid member of staff or the public
- Acts of violence towards a member of staff, another volunteer or against a member of the public
- Malicious damage of property (eg council property, property of other volunteers)
- Deliberate falsification of expenses claim

Conviction for a criminal offence that undermines a volunteer's suitability

## **INSURANCE**

All volunteers are covered under Action21's Employers' Liability Insurance.

## **END OF VOLUNTEERS' PLACEMENT**

All volunteers will be encouraged by the Volunteer Development Worker to fill in an exit questionnaire. This will help us to develop and improve the future quality of volunteering at Action 21.

-----This document was created in Sept 2006. To be reviewed by Sept 2009.

## **ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY**

*Action 21 makes a strong commitment to create a safe and supportive environment for all who wish to work and volunteer at Action 21. We commit to work together with and be a fully inclusive organisation for people of different abilities, ethnic origins and incomes.*

This policy provides guidelines and procedures to ensure that no-one's behaviour at Action21 is oppressive to any other person.

**Oppressive language and behaviour is any that is discriminatory or offensive to any person or group of people.**

People using oppressive language will be challenged positively with the intent of raising their awareness.

The person being oppressive will be challenged regarding their behaviour by an appropriate member of staff.

**What to do if you witness oppressive behaviour or are being oppressed by another's behaviour:**

- If you feel able to, point out to the person that they are behaving oppressively and explain to them how and why this is not acceptable at Action 21
- Talk to a member of staff – tell them how you are feeling and what is happening – suggest how you think the situation can be resolved. They will take appropriate action.
- Talk to the Manager and make a formal complaint.

**People acting in an oppressive manner may be:**

- Removed from any area of work temporarily or permanently.
- Reported to the Police.

Internal note: the anti oppression policy will be annually reviewed. Created September 2006.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

*Action 21 seeks to provide a safe and healthy environment for all staff and volunteers and requires their active support in achieving these ends.*

**It is our policy to promote, maintain and provide standards of healthy and safe working practices and environment.**

All volunteers have the responsibility to co-operate to achieve a healthy and safe work and activity place and to take reasonable care of themselves and others and to co-operate with the Management in matters of safety.

It is the policy of Action 21 to provide all staff and volunteers with the information, training, instructions and supervision that they need to work safely.

**At the Recycle Warehouse** whenever a volunteer notices an actual or potential health and safety hazard that they are not able to put right, they must immediately tell the manager on duty.

### **All volunteers will:**

- Be aware of and learn the fire safety procedure and precautions.
- Be aware of and look out for hazards such as loose flooring, electric flex or faulty equipment and notify staff about such things.
- Be aware of the location of first aid boxes and first aiders.
- Report any accidents to the Manager on duty.
- Not attempt any potentially dangerous tasks without the correct equipment or when alone.
- Not be alone at the Recycle Warehouse under any circumstances.
- Learn and adhere to the safe lifting best practice.

We encourage all our volunteers to suggest ways and means of improving standards.

This is a summary of the Health and Safety Policy. You may ask the Manager for a copy of the full policy.

Internal note: the health and safety policy will be annually reviewed. Created September 2006.

## **SUPERVISION AND TRAINING POLICY**

*The Action 21 volunteer is a highly valued member of the team. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all volunteers are adequately supported in their role and offered opportunities to develop their own skills and knowledge.*

Gabi, our Volunteer Development Worker can be contacted Tuesday to Thursday, within working hours in the office for support.

### **At Action 21 we:**

- Provide induction and on the job training/learning.
- Provide regular opportunities for discussion of progress with each volunteer at supervision meetings. The volunteers will attend supervision meetings with the Volunteer Development Worker, on a regular basis, every 3 months.
- Enable volunteers, where possible, to develop their own role, in agreement with staff.
- Help volunteers identify training needs.
- Identify training opportunities for volunteers, in-house or externally provided, that meet their individual and organisational needs. Where possible we provide funding for training of volunteers.

### **We ask volunteers to:**

- Attend supervision meetings regularly with the Volunteer Development Worker
- Use supervision meetings to raise and discuss any issues of relevance to your volunteering and personal development.
- Attend such training as agreed.
- Report back on and evaluate training whether on the job, in house or externally provided.

Internal note: the supervision and training policy will be reviewed by Sept 2009.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS**

*It is the aim of Action 21 that all volunteers have a positive and rewarding experience while working with us. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that volunteers have a clear channel for airing issues and for making any grievances known to Action 21 staff.*

If you have any problems or issues related to your volunteering at Action 21, you can raise these at the earliest opportunity with the Volunteer Development Worker or the work area supervisor. The sooner we are made aware of a problem, the sooner we can deal with it.

Any issues/problems discussed with the Volunteer Development Worker or any other member of staff will be treated as confidential. Any written information regarding the issue or problem will remain in the volunteer's personal and confidential file.

**In the first instance the Volunteer Development Worker or the work area supervisor will try to resolve the issue by:**

- ◆ Agreeing with you any action that will be taken and the timetable for it.
- ◆ Meeting with other appropriate staff or volunteers to try to resolve the issue.
- ◆ Agreeing a monitoring process (further meetings etc. to ensure that the issue doesn't arise again).
- ◆ Meeting with you subsequently to report on any action taken.

Any resolution will take account of the feelings of the parties involved and will be agreed within the policy and practice of Action 21.

If the Volunteer Development Worker or the work area supervisor is unable to resolve the issue in this way, the volunteer is unhappy with the resolution or the issue is in connection with the Volunteer Development Worker or the work area supervisor, the Action 21 Manager will deal with the issue and the process will be repeated. In the absence of the Manager the issue will be dealt with by the Chair.

Should an issue question the appropriateness or implementation of Action 21 policy, the Volunteer Development Worker and the Manager will start a policy review. Any grievance requiring action which changes custom and practice or impacts on working practices or policy will be reported to and discussed by the Board of Directors in the first instance.

Internal note: The grievance policy will be reviewed by September 2009.

## **PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY**

*While we do not have legal duties towards volunteers, and do not wish to create a contractual relationship with them, we feel that it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with fairly, openly and consistently. To help with this we have put in place the following procedures.*

### **Action 21 will prevent problems arising by:**

- Working with a clear and consistent procedure for selection.
- Ensuring that all volunteers are inducted and aware of the volunteers policies and ground rules of volunteering with Action 21
- Offering appropriate training to all volunteers
- Making sure that our volunteers receive appropriate support

### **If there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour:**

- The Volunteer Development Worker will investigate the cause of the problem and resolve informally in the first instance.
- If the 'problems' are simply due to training needs, a lack of support, inappropriate roles and so on the Volunteer Development Worker in liaison with the Work Area Supervisor will set up a work plan to address this.
- Where informal measures are not enough the Volunteer Development Worker will raise the issue in a formal meeting with the volunteer. The volunteer will be entitled to put their case. If it is felt necessary an informal verbal warning may be issued, with steps agreed to improve conduct.

### **If someone complains about a volunteer:**

This part of the problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to be told why they are being disciplined, the right to state their case and the right to appeal.

#### **Stage 1: verbal discussion**

- The Volunteer Development Worker will invite the volunteer to an verbal discussion in a private setting
- inform the volunteer that this is a formal disciplinary discussion
- assure the volunteer about the confidentiality of the meeting
- discuss the complaint with the volunteer
- the Volunteer Development Worker will minute carefully and signed by all present as true record of the conversation
- The Volunteer Development Worker will set a deadline for reviewing the situation
- The Volunteer Development Worker will keep the person who made the complaint informed of the measures taken to rectify the situation. The Volunteer Development Worker can suggest that complaints are put in writing.

#### **Stage 2 – written warning**

- If there is insufficient improvement, then a more formal approach will be adopted, such as issuing a written warning.
- If the issue hasn't been resolved by the verbal discussion or the review, then the Volunteer Development Worker will issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint.

- The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the Volunteer Development Worker or a senior member of staff
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives will be set, and help offered to the volunteer. However, if the organisation decides to dismiss the volunteer, then the volunteer has the right to appeal. The decision to dismiss the volunteer will be a last resort.

### **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

- If the volunteer has been dismissed then they should appeal in writing to a member of the board of directors, usually the Chair.
- If needed, a sub-committee will be formed specifically to hear the appeal. The Chair or sub-committee will respond in writing in 14 days and the decision is final.

### **Exceptions**

If a volunteer is believed to have behaved in a manner that has or could have seriously affected the organisation –acts that constitute gross misconduct such as theft, bullying, harassment or violence – they will be immediately suspended while the matter is investigated by the Volunteer Development Worker and the Action21 Manager. The volunteer will be able to put their case, and a decision will be made within 14 days. If the complaint against the volunteer is upheld they will be excluded from volunteering.

### **All complaints will be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:**

- protect our volunteers
- minimise any disruption to our staff, clients and other volunteers
- demonstrate that our organisation respects its volunteers
- protect the reputation of our organisation

**In all cases volunteers have the right to be accompanied at meetings on these issues by a volunteer, member of staff or friend.**

**Volunteers can appeal decisions to the board of directors, and will receive a written response within 14 days.**

Internal note: this document will be annually reviewed. Created April 2007

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

*In line with Action 21 mission statement it is essential that we set a good example of environmentally sensitive behaviour. Action 21 staff, volunteers and directors will conduct all our work in a way which minimises the impact on the environment.*

It is the responsibility of all Action 21 staff and volunteers to promote a strong environmental culture within the organisation and lead by example.

**Volunteers are strongly encouraged to take the following measures regarding protection of the environment:**

### ***Energy***

- Turn off computers, monitors, lights, photocopiers and printers when not in use.
- Open windows rather than use air conditioning
- Wear appropriate clothing to avoid excessive heating

### ***Transport***

- Use sustainable methods of travel to and from work, and on work business (i.e. walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing).

### ***Waste and Recycling***

- Re-use envelopes whenever possible
- Keep and re-use paper printed on one side only
- Only print where necessary
- Use e-mail where possible rather than paper communications
- Recycle unusable paper and envelopes
- Recycle other small amounts of waste produced in the office and kitchen e.g. plastic bottles, compost, cans and glass.

### ***Food***

- Where refreshments are provided at Action 21 events we will ensure that food and drinks are locally produced and organic where possible and free of genetically modified ingredients.

**The following organisational measures will also promote a culture of environmental sustainability**

- Action 21 is using office space provided in kind by another organisation. In this position it is difficult to influence environmental standards such as the energy efficiency of office premises, purchasing of renewable energy and having an office wormery. Therefore the environmental policy will be reviewed and amended when Action 21 occupies its own premises.
- All staff and volunteers may claim reimbursement for work related travel of 20p / mile for travelling by bicycle.
- Home working will be supported where appropriate to minimise unnecessary travel.
- Action 21 will buy recycled materials such as stationary wherever possible.

Internal note: the environmental policy will be annually reviewed. Reviewed September 2006.