

Volunteer Information Pack

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About the Friends Centre

In 1945 the Friends Centre began as a centre for Adult Learning in the Quaker Meeting House in Ship Street. Its mission then was to provide a welcoming meeting place for anyone with a hunger for knowledge and fellowship and a need for space in which to develop their creativity and share ideas.

60 years on, the Friends Centre has moved into the brand new Turner Children's Centre in Ivory Place and runs courses throughout the city. The original aims remain the same - to give everyone the opportunity to unlock their potential, to meet others and enjoy themselves. This may be through learning a language, drawing and painting, dancing and singing, improving numeracy or literacy skills or learning English as an additional language. But whatever the learner's aim is, the Friends Centre will always do its best to ensure an enjoyable and enriching learning experience.

Learners can exchange ideas and meet others in a welcoming environment. During our recent, very successful inspection, students said that they value the friendly and supportive tutors and staff, the small groups and the variety of courses on offer. Courses are also run at the Whitehawk Inn Training Centre, The Phoenix Community Centre, The Bridge at Moulsecoomb and many other centres

across Brighton and Hove and are offered mornings, afternoons, evenings and on some Saturdays.

There still remains the need, even today, for somewhere that adults can gather together to talk, create and learn away from work and their busy lives. The Friends Centre remains such a place.



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Reg. Charity No: 1102262 Company No: 4959570

Who is who at the Friends Centre

Juliet Merrifield	Principal j.merrifield@friendscentre.org
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Volunteering with Friends Centre

What kind of voluntary work does Friends Centre offer?

Friends Centre needs volunteer learning support assistants who are interested in helping others, and are willing to spend some of their free time with people who have an interest in learning for all kinds of reasons.

There are several learning projects that are run at the Friends Centre and currently some of these require volunteers. Our Adult Education programme caters for people between the ages of 16–99 from all walks of life. Our learners are people who have decided to continue their education for many different reasons. Some of them require basic education, some are refugees and asylum seekers who need to learn the language to make a life for themselves in their host country while others are learning for pleasure and to satisfy their curiosity. Our programme requires volunteers to help us in assisting learners achieve their goals.

What sorts of activities need the help of volunteers?

There is a wide variety of activities for which volunteers are needed.

- Supporting individual learners in the class.
- Preparing resources

What sorts of people make good volunteers?

There is no such thing as the “ideal” volunteer. Everyone brings their own motivation, skills, experience and personality into their voluntary work.

However, there are some qualities which we feel volunteers need to have.

These include being:

- Patient and sensitive to the needs of others.
- Honest and trustworthy
- Reliable and punctual.
- Tolerant, non-judgmental and able to keep confidentiality.
- Able to work on their own initiative or as part of a team when necessary.

Will I be offered training?

We offer our volunteers a range of training opportunities – disability awareness, supporting learning in the community – accredited courses for volunteers and health and safety awareness.

What about any expenses incurred while volunteering?

You may claim reimbursement of expenses incurred while volunteering for Friends Centre. These include travel expenses, a mileage allowance if using your own car.

How do I become a volunteer with Friends Centre?

First, an informal interview will be arranged at Friends Centre so that you can find out more about Friends Centre and how we work with volunteers. If both you and Friends Centre are happy about your becoming a volunteer, there will be some administrative procedures, which need to be completed. This can sometimes seem bureaucratic, but we do have legal, technical and insurance obligations. If you have any difficulty with any of our forms we will be very happy to help.



Volunteer in a literacy class

Induction

Once we have completed the administrative procedures, and discussed with you how and when you would like to volunteer we will take you to a class as a visitor to find out about our work at first hand.

Does voluntary work with Friends Centre affect entitlement to any benefits?

If you are claiming any benefits, you need to inform the benefits agency of your intention to volunteer and check with the benefits agency that you are OK to start volunteering. If you are on Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support, you must still be actively seeking work and be available to work at short notice. It is important to stress that the

expenses you are receiving are out of pocket expenses and that this is “unpaid voluntary work” as opposed to “paid voluntary work”. If you are currently claiming invalidity benefit, you need to consult your doctor about whether the work you propose to do is considered to be of “therapeutic” benefit.

Do Friends Centre volunteers meet up together for social activities?

We encourage volunteers to come along to our volunteers meeting and training opportunities, when we may have a theme or speaker on a subject relevant to their volunteering.

Does Friends Centre have an Equal Opportunities Policy?

We expect all our volunteers to work to the spirit of our Equal Opportunities.

Policy which encourages positive attitudes towards race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, age and physical appearance etc; we have a Code of Conduct which outlines how our commitment to Equal Opportunities is translated into working practice. We encourage our volunteers to challenge any discrimination or harassment they encounter during their work and equally we aim to challenge oppressive, offensive or discriminatory language and behaviour, to engender an open and sensitive working relationship. Please see our

Equal Opportunities Policy further on in this booklet.

Do volunteers need to supply references?

Many of our learners come from vulnerable groups within society (i.e. older people, people with disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees). As working with these individuals and groups involves a high degree of sensitivity and responsibility, it is our policy to ask volunteers to provide two character references. Referees must be over 21, have known you at least two years and should not be a close relative.

Volunteers are also required to have CRB (Criminal records Bureau) checks. These are needed for anyone working with vulnerable groups.



Adult learners at an ESOL class

Mission Statement

Friends Centre is an independent adult education organisation where people can develop their knowledge, skills, understanding and creativity. In a number of welcoming and supportive places across Brighton and Hove, our learning programme aims to:

- help learners achieve their aspirations and meet the challenges
- stimulate community interest and civic involvement
- promote tolerance, social justice and international understanding.

Equal Opportunities Statement

1. Friends Centre is a Brighton based Educational Charity, which is historically committed to equal opportunities.
2. We believe that education is a right for all regardless of age, ability, gender and culture. Friends Centre welcomes all students (within the constraints of the building) and endeavours to ensure that they are treated as equals and as individuals. We therefore expect our staff to work appropriately with:
 - Students of markedly different ages
 - Men or women
 - Students with some form of disability and/or educational disadvantage
 - Students from other racial, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds
 - Students of another sexual orientation
3. Friends Centre will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in the provision of all the Centre's services and in employment of staff.
4. We believe that equal opportunities is equal access to educational experiences and development. The Centre will seek to identify the needs of disadvantaged groups and potential users in its area of operation and will aim to offer provision with as few barriers as possible.

5. Friends Centre will actively seek to ensure representation amongst teaching staff, administrative staff and the management committee, of minority groups as represented in the student body.
6. This equal opportunities statement will be prominently displayed at the Centre and made available, in advance, to all individuals who apply for employment, volunteering opportunities and contracts.
7. Details of the appropriate grievance and appeals procedures are available from the Centre Manager for any person who considers that they have suffered discrimination.
8. Friends Centre staff, volunteers and committee will have regard to their commitment to equal opportunities when carrying out all their responsibilities.
9. The Centre will monitor the ethnic origin, sex and physical disability of all those seeking employment with the Centre. If applicants for employment with the Centre do not wish to answer these questions their applications will not be affected.
10. It is our policy to actively challenge and eradicate any discriminatory practices.

Volunteer Agreement

Thank you for agreeing to give your time on a voluntary basis to Friends Centre. This document is designed to clarify the relationship between you and Friends Centre.

Friends Centre is committed to providing a high quality education to the community and we do hope that when you offer to volunteer for us you will honour your commitment to the activities and training that you have agreed to carry out.

As a volunteer we expect you to:

- arrive punctually to the designated classes and activities.
- ensure that your health and fitness levels enable you to cope with the demands of your volunteer activities.
- support the ethos and values of Friends Centre.
- give tutors as much prior warning as possible if you are unable to attend a class.
- take any opportunities for self development and growth

For our volunteers we aim to:

- provide appropriate training and inform you of when this is available.
- provide a CRB check
- offer support from the tutor or coordinator if needed.

- have a structure for dealing with volunteer grievances.
- provide a safe environment in which to volunteer.
- inform volunteers about the Skills for Life curriculum and structure (for volunteers working in SfL classes)

Volunteer Grievance Procedure

We wish to ensure that any volunteer who feels dissatisfied with any matter relating to his or her work has an immediate means by which such a grievance can be aired and resolved.

At all stages of the procedure you have the right to be accompanied by a person of your choosing. If you wish to exercise this right, please inform the coordinator of your choice of companion.

1. You should first raise the grievance in writing, stating fully the nature of your grievance to your coordinator.
2. A meeting will be held with your coordinator usually within 5 days of the grievance having been raised. The meeting will enable you to give full details. After the meeting you will be informed of your right to appeal.
3. Should you decide to appeal, you must inform the Principal who will invite you to a further meeting when your appeal will be discussed. You will be informed of the decision.

Full details of this policy are available in the Employee Handbook at the Friends Centre office at Brighton Junction.

Health and Safety Procedures

General Points

1. All employees and volunteers of the Friends Centre have a responsibility to ensure their own health and safety as well as that of learners, volunteers and staff.
2. Any potential or actual health and safety hazards should be reported immediately to Reception or the caretaker on duty.
3. Annual health and safety checks will be carried out by the lead contact for each site, reporting to the Centre Manager. Any actions required will be planned and reviewed regularly.
4. All areas must be kept clear of obstructions at all times. Staff should be especially alert to trip hazards such as trailing leads, boxes and bags on the floor, coats hanging on the backs of chairs.
5. Fire exits must be kept clear and accessible at all times, and fire doors must not be locked while the building is in use.
6. Any accident, however minor, must be recorded in the accident book.
7. Smoking is not allowed in any area.
8. Anyone who feels their health and safety are at risk should report their concerns to the Centre Manager or Principal.

9. The Principal is the 'appointed person' to take charge in an emergency. In her absence the Centre Manager will take charge.

Tarner Children's Centre: Health and Safety Procedures

1. Details of fire and evacuation procedures are posted in every classroom. All staff are expected to have read these and know what to do.
2. All tutors should ensure they point out the fire precautions to volunteers and students when they start a new class, and make sure that they know where the fire exit and assembly points are.
3. The fire alarm will sound if there is a fire. Everyone should immediately leave the building, using the designated exit, and go to the assembly point. Tutors should take their class register with them and make sure that all students are present. Volunteers should help any student they have been designated to assist in the event of an evacuation.
4. The first aid box and accident book is located at reception with a list of qualified first aiders displayed.

Friends Centre outreach sites: Health and Safety Procedures

1. Sites used for outreach activities will have a health and safety review and report completed before classes start. Any actions planned will be reviewed and monitored.
2. Any health and safety concerns at an outreach site should be reported to the lead tutor on site, or if not available to Friends Centre Manager for attention.
3. Each site will have its own fire procedures and these will be identified in the classroom and/or in the centre information pack provided to tutors.
4. There are first aid boxes in all sites. Certain staff have been designated and trained as first aiders and these will be identified in the centre information pack provided to tutors.

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