



# Conway Education Centre Volunteer Handbook

# Hello and Welcome !

Welcome to Conway Education Centre and we hope you will enjoy volunteering with us!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Conway Education Centre and for giving your time and expertise to support our learners and our organisation.

We really value the involvement of volunteers in our work. Volunteers reflect the interests, needs and resources of the local community we serve while bringing unique perspectives and additional skills to all that we deliver.

Volunteering is at the heart of everything the CEC does, from our management committee to the fabulous team of people who make tea and coffee for our centre users, we couldn't continue to exist without your help. Thank you!

Volunteering will provide you with an opportunity to use your skills and to develop new ones. It will give you a chance to meet new friends and actively support your community. All CEC volunteers are eligible to have their travel expenses reimbursed and get free tea and coffee of course!

We want everyone who gives their time to us to feel appreciated and proud to be part of Conway Education Centre.

This handbook will explain the things you need to know about volunteering with us. We hope you find it helpful. If you would like any more information about any of the subjects covered, please contact your volunteer supervisor and they will be more than happy to help you.

So thanks again for joining the Conway family, we're really glad to have you on board!

Pauline Kersten  
Centre manager  
Conway Education Centre



# About Us ....

Conway Education Centre started life as a community initiative in 1982. Over the many years since, we have delivered hundreds of accredited and unaccredited courses to individuals who wanted to return to education, to develop an interest, develop their skills or get a qualification.

Our staff and tutors are experienced, patient and approachable. Our canteen always has a cup of coffee/tea and biscuits ready.

Besides providing courses to adults, we also provide homework support to primary school children and we deliver an alternative education project for young people not in mainstream school.

**Our mission:** Empowering people through providing learning opportunities in a supportive environment.

**Our aims:**

- ♦ Supporting the development and regeneration of the local community through learning and capacity building and providing opportunities for educational progression and employment.
- ♦ Championing community education as a tool for community engagement and social inclusion.
- ♦ To contribute to improved health, particularly the mental and emotional wellbeing of the local community

- ♦ Working in partnership with individuals and groups to achieve change and the long-term goal of a more equal, non-sectarian and anti-racist society.

## About You ....

Conway has many amazing volunteers from all walks of life, involved in a variety of roles.

Our volunteers are committed, reliable, and enthusiastic and bring a breath of fresh air and a wealth of experience and expertise. Some people volunteer as tutors or mentors, as homework support helpers, others volunteer in our cosy canteen and provide the all-important coffees and teas in the afternoons and evenings, and others again provide organisational support through administration and IT work.

We don't have a typical volunteer, our volunteers come from all parts of Belfast and they are vital to our work.



# Ways to get involved ...

## **Centre Support Volunteer:**

We have a wide range of activities around the Conway Education Centre that require support from volunteers. From making tea and coffee in the afternoons and evenings for our centre users, to carrying out office administrative and reception tasks, volunteers are essential to the regular day to day operation of the CEC. It might not seem like much, but helping with making tea and coffee through the afternoon and evening for centre users is an ongoing need in the CEC and volunteers who can help with this are much in demand.

## **Organisational support:**

Fundraising; you have experience with and would like to assist in developing a fundraising strategy, identifying fundraising opportunities and help to write applications.

Communication & Marketing; you would like to help with informing our communities about learning opportunities at Conway, helping to reach potential learners. This could be done through handing out leaflets in shopping centres or perhaps by going along with our adult education coordinator to speak to groups and organisations about the learning opportunities offered by Conway.

## **Homework support Volunteer:**

You will play a vital role encouraging and supporting children in their learning, supporting them doing homework tasks, encouraging them to complete tasks and helping them to grow in confidence.

## **Volunteer mentor:**

Providing one-to-one practical support and encouragement to our adult students in English and Maths. The volunteer mentor is knowledgeable and proficient in either English or Maths, (preferably with at least a level 3 qualification in English or Maths) who has a very positive attitude, excellent communication skills and is flexible, patient and supportive.

## **Student Internships:**

We provide student intern placements in a variety of interesting roles. The internship could focus on identifying the most appropriate tools to evaluating project outcomes and measuring impact. You could be involved in assisting to develop and review organisational strategies for fundraising and marketing. Or you might look at ways of optimising the way we communicate with our learners and reach new target groups.



# Expectations ....

## What you can expect from us ....

We want to make sure you are enjoying your volunteering with us and get the most out of it.

Our commitment to our volunteers:

- ◇ We will always treat you with respect and consideration.
- ◇ We will ensure you have a clear idea of your role and responsibilities and who you can turn to for support and information
- ◇ Give you information about training opportunities that could help you in your volunteering role
- ◇ Provide you with support through regular meetings or discussions.
- ◇ Offer you honest and timely feedback on your work



## What we expect from you ....

We expect high standards from all our supporters whether they are paid staff or volunteers.

Staff and volunteers abide by a **Code of Conduct** which includes:

- ◇ To treat other volunteers, staff and centre users with respect and consideration
- ◇ To act in a friendly and courteous way whenever you represent Conway Education Centre in public
- ◇ To act in a way that doesn't discriminate against or excludes anyone
- ◇ To provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering role or if you no longer want to be involved in a project
- ◇ If you don't fully understand your volunteering role, please ask your Conway volunteer supervisor for guidance.



# Essentials ....

As a volunteer you will need to be aware of the following policies and procedures of Conway Education Centre. Please take a few minutes to have a good read through and familiarise yourself with them.

## Expenses and how to claim

**them:** Conway will reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. We will only reimburse the amount that you have spent as a result of your volunteering up to agreed maximum levels. Tickets and receipts need to be provided in order to reclaim the money. To claim travel expenses volunteers need to use the Volunteer Travel Form (see appendices) and get it authorised by their volunteer supervisor.

**Health and safety:** CEC is committed to looking after the health, safety and well-being of everyone who works for us on our premises. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as those carried out by paid staff. It is therefore important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe working environment for all. It is important that you:

- ♦ Carry out your duties without endangering either your own health

and safety or that of colleagues, centre users and/or the general public

- ♦ Inform your volunteer supervisor of any health and safety requirements that you have
- ♦ Comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to safety and follow guidance from your volunteer supervisor.

If you have any doubts or concerns regarding health and safety in your volunteering role, please talk to your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible.

**Accidents and incidents:** All accidents and incidents must be reported to your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible

**Boundaries:** Clear boundaries are important for staff, volunteers and centre users. They enable us to carry out a service according to agreed expectations and ensure that everybody receives the same quality of service.



# Essentials continued ....

**Confidentiality:** Volunteers must maintain confidentiality during their time with CEC. This means that confidential information about individual centre users, staff and other volunteers is kept private, unless sharing this information is required by law.

**Criminal Records check::** CEC is involved in working with children, young people and sometimes vulnerable adults. For this reason, our staff and volunteers are required to undergo a criminal record check before they can start their work with CEC, as part of our policy on safeguarding. Your volunteer supervisor will give you further information on this process.

**Equality:** We are committed to a policy of treating all volunteers and volunteer applicants equally and fairly. We accept volunteers based on their suitability for the role. We won't discriminate against any volunteers because of their age, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, political beliefs, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

**No smoking policy:** You are not allowed to smoke in Conway Education Centre or in the Conway Mill building. There is a dedicated smoking shelter in the top right-hand corner of the car-park.

**Insurance:** Conway has Employer's Liability insurance. This provides insurance against liability for injury and disease experienced by volunteers and staff as a direct result of their activities with CEC. As a registered volunteer, you are also covered by our public liability insurance when carrying out your volunteering role on our behalf.

These policies can be downloaded in full from our website:

[www.conwayeducation.org/volunteering](http://www.conwayeducation.org/volunteering)

Please have a good read and if there's anything you don't understand, ask your volunteer supervisor, they'll be happy to explain.





# Volunteers ....

## Recognition for our volunteers

We celebrate our fantastic volunteers and recognise the vital contribution they make to our work every year, during volunteers week.

You will also receive a volunteer certificate as evidence of your important contribution to Conway Education Centre.

Additionally, your volunteer supervisor will provide you with a written reference upon request.



## Dealing with difficulties

### Problems within your role:

If you have a difficulty with any aspect of your volunteering role, please talk to your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible for advice and support. If the role isn't working out as hoped, please let your volunteer supervisor know. Together you should try to work out any difficulties. If it is agreed it can't work, this shouldn't be seen as a failure. Speak to your volunteer supervisor about finding a more appropriate role.

### Dealing with complaints:

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve the way we do things and provide a better service for our centre users. We define a complaint very broadly, as 'a statement of dissatisfaction'. This covers any kind of comment – spoken or written – which relates to dissatisfaction, whether or not it's labelled as a complaint, and whether or not it needs a formal response. If you want to make a complaint or If you receive a complaint from someone about your service or anything to do with Conway's work, please pass the information on to your volunteer supervisor. (see full policies).





# Support ....

## We will support you:

Your volunteer supervisor will introduce you to the volunteers and/or staff you will be working with. They'll also go over health and safety requirements and other policies you need to be aware of. Please use this opportunity to ask any questions and to highlight any areas you would like training or support in.

You will have a settling-in period and after about four weeks your volunteer supervisor will meet up with you to have a chat, to give both you and us a chance to assess how things are working out.

## Training:

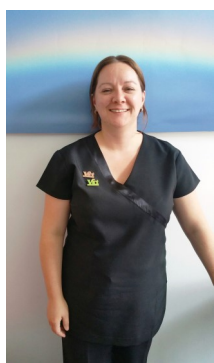
We want to ensure you are happy and confident to carry out your role. You will be invited to attend any relevant training that Conway organises for staff and volunteers, such as Child protection, working with Vulnerable Adults, etc.

## Reliability and commitment:

It is very important that you are reliable and you stick to any arrangement you have made with us. If your circumstances change, please let your Conway Volunteer supervisor know as soon as possible.

## Support:

You will receive ongoing support from Conway. You will have regular review meetings with your volunteer supervisor. These meetings are an opportunity to raise issues and for you to talk constructively about your involvement with us.



# Conway's Volunteering policy ....

1. Conway Education Centre values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective on all our work.
2. Conway Education Centre recognises volunteers as a core part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff.
3. Conway Education Centre acknowledges that volunteering is a beneficial experience for both volunteers and service users. We believe that Conway Education Centre benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers, and we believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience.
4. Conway Education Centre strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation within a diverse and inclusive community. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices.
5. Conway Education Centre identifies roles for volunteers which extend the work of the organisation. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement, but never substitute, the work of paid staff.
6. Volunteers will not be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular tasks, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.
7. All volunteers are provided with a Welcome Letter, outlining their agreed role, settling-in period and support structure.
8. Volunteers with Conway Education Centre are fully protected by the organisation's Employer's and Public Liability Insurance. However, drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.
9. Conway Education Centre reimburses volunteers' genuine out of pocket expenses and claims can be submitted using the Volunteers Expenses Form and accompanied by proof of expenditure.
10. Conway Education Centre endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles.
11. The Centre Manager is responsible for the overall management of volunteer involvement, including overseeing the implementation of this policy and dealing with any complaints relating to volunteers.
12. The volunteer's designated supervisor provides support and supervision, can offer training opportunities, countersigns expenses claims etc. All staff required to undertake volunteer supervision duties will receive guidance in supervision and support of volunteers.
13. Conway Education Centre implements a fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers and treats all information collected in this process confidentially.
14. All potential volunteers will complete a registration form and meet with the centre manager for a chat about volunteering roles. Additional measures may be implemented depending on the nature of the volunteer role and police records checks are conducted where appropriate.
15. All volunteers will be made familiar with Conway Education Centre structures and procedures; their volunteer role and will receive information how they will be supported, including practical information on claiming expenses.
16. All volunteers are allocated a named member of staff as their supervisor (although the Centre Manager can also be contacted in case of an emergency or if the designated supervisor is unavailable). This individual can provide day-to-day help and guidance on any issue related to the voluntary work and is responsible for providing regular support to, and supervision of, the volunteer.
17. Conway Education Centre aims to reflect the voluntary nature of our relationship with volunteers in all our policies and procedures for managing their involvement. Therefore, the volunteer's designated supervisor deals with minor complaints about or by volunteers or their work through the usual support and supervision procedures, in the first instance.
18. However, we recognise our duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of all our stakeholders and therefore operate a formal complaints procedure in the case of more serious complaints according to Conway Education Centre Complaints Policies.

# Expenses Claim Form—example

## CEC Volunteer Expenses Claim Form

This form is to be used to record those expenses you incur while volunteering for Conway Education Centre, for which you wish to be reimbursed. The types of expenditure for which we provide reimbursement are:

1. Travel expenses (public transport and mileage - £0,40p per mile)
2. Lunch expenses (up to £5) when volunteering more than 4 hours per session
3. Other relevant out-of-pocket expenses which have been agreed beforehand with your volunteer supervisor

Date	Type of expense/Mileage and reason for travel	Amount

These represent an accurate account of my out of pocket expenses.

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Name of volunteer

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Authorised by

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Signature

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Date



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