

Volunteer Community Advocate

Role Description



This Volunteer Advocate role supports our clients in the community who are not eligible for help through the statutory advocacy provision. The role involves advocating for clients in the community on specific issues such as housing, benefits, or access to services.

Responsible to: **Supervising Advocate**

Supported by: **Generic Advocacy Team**

Location: **Bristol, Somerset and South Gloucestershire**

This post is subject to satisfactory application, references, interview and DBS.

Benefits of Volunteering with SWAN

- The opportunity to develop new and existing skills and gain experience volunteering in a charity
- The opportunity to meet new people
- The opportunity to build a Personal Development Portfolio with full training and ongoing access to keep knowledge and skills up to date
- Out of pocket expenses reimbursed – mileage £0.45 per mile, Bike £0.20 per mile plus parking tickets, bus and train fares etc
- The satisfaction of knowing you are making a vital difference to the work of SWAN
- The satisfaction of knowing that the client is given a voice despite their capacity being impaired and that they are supported to challenge restrictions in place around their care and treatment
- Learning first-hand about the laws and legislations that protect people who are assessed as lacking capacity
- Training and support through a thorough Induction and on-going support, advice and guidance
- Being part of an organisation, which has strong values and provides help and support to those most marginalised in society
- Full training and ongoing access to keep knowledge and skills up to date

What will you be doing?

- Making regular contact with the client and advocate on their behalf on a specific issue such as housing, benefits or accessing services
- Contacting clients to establish what they need and creating an Advocacy Agreement for the issues they have
- Attending meetings with clients and helping them voice what they want
Keeping records of client interactions on our online database



- Empowering clients to self-advocate using our Self-Advocacy Toolkit as a guide
- Safeguarding the client's best interests
- Work alongside clients, in the community to enable their individual issues to be represented.
- To support clients to articulate their own views wherever possible or speak on clients' behalf and represent them where requested or where appropriate.
- Promote the rights, equality, diversity and needs of our clients by ensuring they are respected and valued as individuals
- Ensure that clients have access to information about services that is presented in an appropriate manner for their individual needs

What type of person are we looking for?

- Positive attitude towards vulnerable clients who may have a variety of complex needs
- Available 6 hours per week
- Confident to communicate both verbal and written information
- Some experience of record keeping and report writing
- Some knowledge and understanding of the benefits system
- Some knowledge and understanding of the housing system
- Knowledge and understanding of Safeguarding is desirable but full training is given
- Adaptable and approachable telephone manner.
- Comfortable using Microsoft Office, emails and database
- Computer literate however full training is given in the systems we use and there is ongoing support for all IT

Please note that while the skills and knowledge listed are good to have, SWAN also appreciates that life experience can make you the ideal volunteer. We are keen to hear from people who have experienced adversity and difficulties in speaking out for themselves, who have found their voice and for whom advocacy would have been beneficial. The most important attribute is a drive to help others speak out on issues that are important to them.

What we need to you to do?

- Complete a 6-month Induction including mandatory training required to undertake the role
- After gaining an appropriate level of experience, to participate in relevant on-going training to keep up to date with services, procedures, guidelines, and legislation that affect the organisation and the clients who need the services
- To take individual responsibility to alert the organisation to health and safety matters, and general organisational needs and issues.
- To attend regular team meetings/ briefings
- To attend 6-8 weekly supervision as outlined in the Volunteer Policy

Equality and Diversity Statement

Equality, diversity and inclusion are core to our values. In the selection of our staff and volunteers, we are committed to equality with regards to protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome applications from people with disabilities, who are culturally diverse and who have used advocacy services. The Volunteer must ensure a positive commitment towards equality by treating others fairly and not committing any form of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation, or harassment of any description and to promote positive working relations amongst employees, volunteers, suppliers and customers.