



# Volunteer Pack



“I was a volunteer for 9 years with SWAN after I retired. I worked in the Mental Capacity Team as a representative for people who are in care homes and might want to challenge the authorisation that deprives them of their liberty.

The role is really working on your own, that’s just the nature of it and you go out to all sorts of places to meet your clients. But the support was really good, management checking in and making sure you’re OK, so I never felt I didn’t have anyone to speak to.

My principal motivations in volunteering was being social, meeting people and to keep my mind sharp, joining SWAN was a really good move in that respect. But further, I do feel it was a privilege to be given so much opportunity and trust.”

**Tim Unsworth,**  
**Volunteer Advocate, Somerset**



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"Volunteering with SWAN provided a great introduction to Advocacy. Despite joining during COVID restrictions I was inducted in a timely manner, made to feel supported and encouraged to join in with many training opportunities with other friendly members of staff and volunteers.

I thoroughly enjoyed the training that was available to me. I felt very comfortable with my role after I received shadowing and experienced a colleague working with clients within my role. I felt empowered and keen to encourage my clients to experience the same with my support."

**Sophia Henry,  
Volunteer Advocate,  
South Gloucestershire Team**

Sophia has progressed to become a paid Independent Advocate



# THANK YOU TO OUR INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS

“It takes a special kind of person to volunteer, to provide their time, skills, passion and energy for free, to benefit others. Volunteering takes vision and a desire to contribute toward a better life for all -and it is not easy! As well as absorbing information, creating new relationships and learning new skills, it’s a commitment and once engaged, people rely on our volunteers to be there. SWAN is lucky to have such volunteers, that take time out of their lives on a regular basis and support the work we do in a variety of ways that are vitally important to our organisation and the people we work with.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, you are appreciated.”

**Vikki Holloway,  
SWAN CEO**



## WELCOME,

We are delighted that you are considering SWAN to volunteer your precious time with. We are a growing team of volunteers and the organisation values each and every one of those who provide their time and expertise to our services.

We hope that this pack will give you all the information you need to decide which role you may like to do. We also hope it demonstrates why volunteering with SWAN will be beneficial to you and us.

SWAN recognises the value of volunteers and as you will see in this pack we have a number of incentives and benefits available to those who volunteer with us. We have a robust expenses policy which ensures our volunteers are never financially disadvantaged to do a role with us and offer a variety of training opportunities to support your development.

The motivators for people volunteering are so varied and alongside the financial and development benefits we work with our volunteers to ensure that they are meeting their desired outcomes. We have supported a number of our volunteers to go on to paid positions both within SWAN and other charitable organisations as their aim was to access paid employment.

SWAN understand that some people may not have all the desired skills and attributes but come with a wealth of 'lived experience' that can mean that they are just as capable of doing the role. We welcome those who have a set of life skills that mean that they can understand and advocate for the vulnerable people we work with.

We look forward to welcoming you to SWAN soon!

*"I feel honoured to support volunteers into our organisation. As someone who has volunteered for a number of charities in varying capacities I know how rewarding it is to give something back but also how important it is to feel valued.*

*I am proud to work for SWAN because volunteering is such an integral part of our services and everyone plays a part in ensuring our volunteers have the support and guidance to achieve their goals."*

**Anna Temblett**  
**Volunteer Manager**



# 1. WHO WE ARE?

South West Advocacy Network (SWAN) work with people from all walks of life and have already supported thousands of the most marginalised people in our communities; helping to have their voices heard and their choices respected by those making decisions about their future.

Since 1999, we have developed a high-quality model of advocacy which ensures all members of our communities have the same rights and opportunities as their fellow citizens. We have developed an excellent reputation for delivering independent, high quality, cost effective advocacy services across Bristol, BaNES, Pan-Dorset, Isle of Wight, North Somerset, Portsmouth, Somerset, South Gloucestershire and West Berkshire.

We believe that everyone has the right to be heard and respected. We believe that everyone has the right of choice and need someone by their side. We believe everyone has the right to be safe.

Our services are free, confidential and non-judgmental. Our approach is focused on empowering individuals to make decisions, promoting independence as much as possible.

## **SWANs charitable purposes are:**

- a) the relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage in particular but not exclusively by the delivery of advocacy, money management and debt counselling and
- b) the advancement of education in particular but not exclusively through the delivery of self-advocacy, training, and end of life planning and
- c) the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity in particular but not exclusively by the provision of statutory advocacy and victim support services.

## **SWAN's Mission, Vision and Values 2022 - 2027**

### **SWANs Mission is:**

*"To be a fair and inclusive employer, respected by all stakeholders for delivering high quality, person centred and innovative services that ensure equal access to rights."*

### **SWANs Vision is:**

*"A world without discrimination, with true social justice, where people are treated as equals and have influence on the decisions that affect their lives."*

### **SWANs Values are:**

**Impartiality:** We believe everyone deserves social justice and free access to advocacy

**Innovation:** We will build resilience into our organisation finding innovative ways of working to deliver effective services in a rapidly changing environment

**Inclusivity:** We will work with all & will engage with our communities to find new ways to support those who are vulnerable and marginalised

**Impact:** We will make a positive difference wherever we work





## INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY SERVICES


Local Authorities commission Independent Advocacy Services to advocate for people in line with legislation. This is often referred to as Statutory Advocacy. SWAN is commissioned to provide Independent Advocacy in Bristol, Dorset Isle of Wight, Somerset and South Gloucestershire.





The types of advocacy we provide are\*:

 **Care Act Advocacy**—The Care Act 2014 says local councils must involve people in decisions about their care and support. Advocates help people be heard, understand their choices and make their own decisions about their care needs. Changes brought in by the Care Act mean that any decisions about a person's care will consider their welfare and what is important to them so they can stay as healthy and independent as possible.

 **Mental Capacity Advocacy**—When someone cannot ask for an advocate themselves because they lack capacity, it does not mean their views and wishes should be disregarded. Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy was introduced as part of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. This gives those who are unable to make a specific decision for themselves the right to receive independent support and representation.

 **Mental Health Advocacy**—If someone is being detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, they are legally entitled to support from an Independent Mental Health Advocate.

 **Health Complaints Advocacy**- independent NHS complaints advocacy will support people who want to make a formal complaint about the care and/or treatment they have received. We guide them through the NHS Complaints Procedure. This can be about any aspect of NHS-funded healthcare.

 **Generic (Community) Advocacy** offers support for a variety of day-to-day issues such as benefit appeals, accessing services or housing. We work with individuals who may find it hard being involved in decisions that affect them, such as those with learning difficulties, physical health problems, mental health problems, acquired brain injury and dementia.

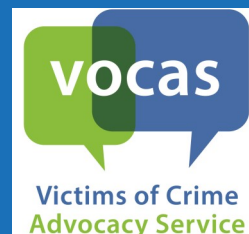
\*Please note we do not provide all types of advocacy in all our service areas.



## VICTIMS OF CRIME ADVOCACY SERVICE (VOCAS)

VOCAS is a free, independent and confidential advocacy service for adult victims of crime and anti-social behaviour living in Somerset, Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

Victims over the age of 18 can access advocacy, alongside practical and emotional support to help them to cope and recover from their experience and to engage with the criminal justice system if they choose to do so.



### **This enhanced service is available for**

- Adult victims who have barriers or additional support requirements linked to:
- Adult victims who have been targeted because of their:
  - \* Race \* Religion \* Sexuality \* Gender identity \* Mental health issues \* Learning difficulties \* Physical disabilities \* Problems associated with old age \* Problems associated with social exclusion or isolation

**We work with victims whether or not they have reported to the police and no matter how long ago the crime or anti-social behaviour took place.**

## BE HEARD

Be Heard is our service wide programme which is aimed at providing self-advocacy training to the communities in which we work. We do this by running self-advocacy workshops, drop-in sessions, group and 1 to 1 training for both vulnerable people in the community and the professionals who work with them.



We provide a Self-Advocacy Toolkit and our aim is to give everyone the confidence and resources that they need to advocate for themselves.

**"Thank you Natalie I am most grateful you were there for the assessment with (Social Worker) Safeguarding. Thank you. Sorry I have been so scared so I am most thankful you were 'beside' me."**

**Bristol Care Act Client**

**"Thank you Pedro. After our phone conversation & progression plan, I/we do feel supported impartially, for the first time in 10 years."**

**VOCAS Client**

**"Thank you! I feel very confident in self-advocacy because I have more knowledge about what my rights are (and where to look if I don't know) and have a planned approach that I was missing before."**

**Be Heard Somerset Workshop Attendee**



## 2. THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING WITH SWAN

As a Volunteer you give us your precious time to support our services. At SWAN we are determined to ensure that you benefit from your time with us.

In thanks for you giving us your time we offer you:



The opportunity to meet new people and be part of a team. You'll have the opportunity to attend Team meetings, Workforce Events and Volunteer Catch Ups.



We can support you to progress to paid employment. We reimburse all Out of Pocket Expenses—£0.45 per mile for mileage, all bus and train fares, parking tickets etc...



The opportunity to build a Personal Development Portfolio with full training and ongoing access to keep knowledge and skills up to date. Our training opportunities include:

**Mandatory Training in:**  
**Safeguarding Adults & Children**  
**Health & Safety**  
**Equality & Diversity**  
**Data Protection**  
**Lone Working**

**Additional Training in:**  
**Advocacy Purposes and Principles**  
**Coaching**

Alongside a whole host of workshops and external training aimed at giving you the skills and confidence in your role.

If working directly with clients, you will also have the opportunity to do the **Diploma in Independent Advocacy Practice**.



We offer a wide range of wellbeing support including a Duty Debrief System that supports your wellbeing following a challenging client interaction, Mental Health First Aid and a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme offering a range of support for issues faced at work or in your personal life.

"SWAN staff are friendly, professional and approachable. There is a culture of learning and mutual support which I love! I have regular 1:1 meetings with a SWAN staff member; the support and encouragement has been invaluable."  
Justin, Living Well Volunteer

"The thing I have enjoyed most is the friendly team and learning about the crucial role of advocates in community social care." Rose, Volunteer RPR

### 3. WHAT TYPE OF PERSON ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- ✓ You must have a positive attitude towards people who may have a variety of complex needs
- ✓ Be confident in communicating both verbal and written information
- ✓ Have some experience with record keeping and report writing for client facing roles
- ✓ Some knowledge and understanding of Safeguarding however full training will be given
- ✓ Be IT Literate—able to send emails, navigate Microsoft Office and use a computer confidently
- ✓ Be someone who enjoys being part of a team



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.

If this sounds like you then please do get in touch. We can be flexible in what you do and how you contribute and will provide you with any additional support or assistance you may need.



## 4. BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

### Application



Application Form, this is where you initially tell us about yourself so that we can assess which role might be best suited to you. Why do you want to volunteer and what experience do you have already?

### Interview



If selected you will then attend an interview. This can be either in person or online depending on your preference.

Our interviews are informal and are about getting to know you and what is motivating you to volunteer. We ask a few questions to gain an insight into your understanding of your area of service delivery and any training needs you may have. Most importantly though we want to make sure we are clear with you about the role and expectations and how we can ensure your volunteer experience is the best it can be.

### DBS Checks



Following a successful interview you will need to be DBS Checked.

Having something on your DBS would not automatically exclude you from being able to volunteer with us. We appreciate that people can have things from their past which they have moved on from and we are open to supporting people to progress forward positively. We would carry out a risk assessment to ensure that we consider the safety of those we provide our services to.

### References



You will need to supply 2 References. These can be from employers, friends, tutors or people who know you well but must not be from relatives.

### Induction



You will have a two part induction.

The first is with our Volunteer Manager who will introduce you to SWAN and our main policies and procedures, the support you will receive and the expectations we have for you. The second part will be the induction into the service with whom you are going to carry out your role and this is supported by your line manager.

### Training and Shadowing



You will need to complete any mandatory training required for your role within the first 8 weeks. You will regularly go out shadowing with trained colleagues to see your role in practice. We will review your progress at 1, 3 and 6 months to ensure we are on track.

Please note that all roles at SWAN require you to be  18+

## 5. VOLUNTEER ROLES

### VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE

Volunteer Advocates support our Statutory Advocacy Services and the role is varied. There are two main areas in which Volunteers can get involved.

#### VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY ADVOCATE



6 hours per week



Dorset & Somerset

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.

#### What types of things will you be doing?

- 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

#### VOLUNTEER RELEVANT PERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE (RPR)



2– 6 hours per week



Bristol, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Somerset

Volunteer RPR's advocate for clients living in restricted settings and care homes, to ensure their best interests are safeguarded and their rights are upheld. Clients requiring a Relevant Persons Representative are subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Authorisation (DoLS) from the Local Authority.

#### What will you be doing?

- Visit the client regularly, usually every 4 weeks
- Check that the client is receiving the right care and support
- Write and send regular reports to the DoLS Team
- Keep records of client interactions on our online database



The Volunteer Advocate roles will require you to work with clients with varying needs. Some may have experienced or may be experiencing mental ill health. They may have a learning disability or a physical disability. They may have dementia or significant communication difficulties. You must be able to adapt how you communicate to meet the needs of the individual and show empathy to those who from all walks of life and appreciate that everyone has the right to have their voice heard regardless of their circumstances.

We welcome applications from volunteers with their own direct lived experience of the issues our clients face.



## VOLUNTEER ADVOCACY COACH

Our Advocacy Coach role supports our Be Heard Self-Advocacy programmes.



3-6 hours per week



All areas of service delivery



The role of an Advocacy Coach is to support people to develop the skills and confidence to self-advocate.

This is done through:

- Self-Advocacy Workshops, where people learn about our Toolkit and how to use it
- Peer Advocacy groups where we encourage people to support each other
- 1:1 advocacy coaching so that people feel confident to speak up for a particular event

This ensures that people have greater choice and control over their lives, both now and in the future.

### What will you be doing?

- Working in our Be Heard team to co-deliver the workshops, drop-ins or 1:1 sessions
- Working in a team to co-deliver bespoke advocacy awareness and self-advocacy workshops for other professionals working with vulnerable people
- Helping to gather feedback from the attendees both verbally and via surveys

"I have felt really valued and been given training and opportunities to develop in my role."  
Volunteer Advocacy Coach

## VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY CHAMPION



2-4 hours per month



All areas of service delivery

Volunteer Community Champions support us in promoting the services we provide, by raising awareness of what we offer, assisting with events, and improving engagement with the community. You will have strong links with the local community and understand the needs of local citizens.

### What will you be doing?

- Attend events in the area to promote SWAN
- Liaise with and visit community groups
- Research and identify areas where clients may not be referred to our services
- Help us think of ways to better access the local community, and potential clients



# VOLUNTEER VICTIM ADVOCATE



6 hours per week



Avon & Somerset (BaNES, Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, South Gloucestershire)

Volunteer Victim advocates help victims have their voices heard and support them to cope with the impact of crime or anti-social behaviour.

This is a varied role where you will be supporting the delivery and promotion of a diverse, inclusive and victim led independent advocacy and support service. Helping people through a time when they feel at their most vulnerable.

Volunteer Victim Advocates also support the VOCAS Self-Advocacy programme and provide 1:1 workshops and mentoring that will empower our clients to self-advocate by giving them the skills and confidence to do this effectively.

## What types of things will you be doing?

- Contacting clients to establish what they need and creating an Advocacy Agreement for the issues they have
- Empowering clients to self-advocate using our Self-Advocacy or Anti-Social Behaviour Toolkit as a guide
- Attending meetings with clients and helping them voice what they want
- Keeping records of client interactions on our online database
- Providing regular emotional support
- Researching suitable organisations for signposting



**Victims of Crime  
Advocacy Service**

“Volunteering as a Victim Advocate has been both fascinating and challenging. It has given me the chance to help make a positive difference to someone’s life. Through providing emotional support to clients and communicating with services such as the police.

Volunteering with VOCAS has provided me with the experience and inspiration to pursue a career in victim support.

I am very thankful for this opportunity.'

**Ella Carter**

**Volunteer Victim Advocate**

**VOCAS**



## 6. HOW TO GET IN TOUCH?



### Call

03333 44 7928



### Email

[coproduction@swanadvocacy.org.uk](mailto:coproduction@swanadvocacy.org.uk)

[volunteer@swanadvocacy.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@swanadvocacy.org.uk)



### Website

[www.swanadvocacy.org.uk](http://www.swanadvocacy.org.uk)



### Post

South West Advocacy Network

Hi Point

Thomas Street

Taunton

TA2 6HB



### Follow us on social media



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