
Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Mount Community Association works to encourage the creation of active communities. It works with host organisations to use community currencies to encourage local people to become actively involved in their communities.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Mount Community Association. It is of relevance to volunteers and trustees of the organisation.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to ensure cohesion and consistency to all the elements in Mount Community Association that affect volunteers.
- 1.4 This policy is endorsed by the Committee of Mount Community Association and will be kept under review to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of Mount Community Association and its volunteers.

2. Commitment

The organisation:

- 2.1 Values the unique and valuable contribution made by volunteers and is committed to working in ways which encourage and support volunteers.
- 2.2 Is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions which would benefit the organisation, volunteers, members, users of services and the wider community.

3. Statement of values and principles

The organisation:

- 3.1 Appreciates that volunteering is enjoyable and can change and enrich the lives of individuals.
- 3.2 Recognises that volunteering has the capacity to build skills and confidence and contributes to individuals' personal development.
- 3.3 Respects volunteers in both listening to and learning from what they have to say; feedback from volunteers is always welcome.
- 3.4 Acknowledges volunteering is of wider benefit to society.
- 3.5 Values volunteering as an inclusive act of participation.
- 3.6 Recognises that volunteering has an important role to play in helping people who are excluded from society to participate and become active members of their communities.
- 3.7 Recognises that volunteering is at the heart of the emerging civil society agenda and that through volunteering people can influence decisions.

- 3.8 Distinguishes volunteering from employment and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 A volunteer is someone who, without expectation of financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of the organisation.
- 4.2 The definition of volunteering used by the Welsh Assembly Government in the Voluntary Sector Scheme is:
- 'Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.'*
- 4.3 Volunteering is a legitimate activity that is supported and encouraged by the organisation and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.
- 4.4 Steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff, especially those directly involved in volunteer placements, are clear about the role of volunteers and that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers.
- 4.5 Volunteers will not be utilised during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.
- 4.6 The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time or carry the tasks provided. Likewise the organisation cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken.
- 4.7 Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged - both what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

5. Recruitment and selection

- 5.1 The organisation is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, political beliefs. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks.
- 5.2 The organisation implements a fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers and treats all information collected in the process confidentially.

Volunteers have a clear and concise description of their role and tasks. These are established by the designated officer after discussions with the volunteer. Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence.

6. Training and development

- 6.1 All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all relevant the organisation's policies including the volunteering policy, health and safety policy and the equal opportunities policy.
- 6.2 All volunteers will receive a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy.
- 6.3 On commencement of voluntary activity, volunteers will be given all the necessary information required to complete their role during an induction process.
- 6.4 The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the organisation in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks.
- 6.5 All training offered to volunteers will be relevant to their role in order to equip volunteers with the information and skills they need.
- 6.6 Volunteers' training needs will be identified and training will be arranged and/or delivered by the designated officer.
- 6.7 Training on 'working with volunteers' will be available for staff and volunteers involved in volunteer management, supervision, support and training of volunteers.

7. Support and supervision

- 7.1 The organisation acknowledges the need for a clear, consistent organisational framework for voluntary involvement.
- 7.2 Each volunteer will have a designated member of staff to guide and advise them in their tasks. Volunteers will be informed of whom to approach for support and have regular access to that person.
- 7.3 The designated officer will support volunteers and give day-to-day help on any issue related to the voluntary work.
- 7.4 Regular supervision meetings will be available for volunteers to discuss any problems or issues that may arise.
- 7.5 The frequency, duration and format of this support and supervision is agreed between the volunteer and his/her designated officer.

8. Expenses

- 8.1 The organisation recognises that payments of expenses are important from an equal opportunities perspective and vital in ensuring that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.
- 8.2 The organisation's volunteers are able to claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of expenditure.
- 8.3 The organisation has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenditure incurred by individuals upon the affairs of the organisation. The rates of reimbursement apply to volunteers, staff and committee members and are those approved by the Inland Revenue.
- 8.4 The organisation will ensure that all volunteers are aware of the procedure for claiming expenses including all other information relating to this.

9. Conditions of service

- 9.1 The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.
- 9.2 The organisation does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage.
- 9.3 The organisation recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time. Exit interviews are offered to ascertain why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether they may want to be involved again in the future.

10. Security and confidentiality

- 10.1 The organisation will advise volunteers of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information.
- 10.2 The designated officer will hold a record of names and addresses of all registered volunteers for the purposes of security and health and safety.
- 10.3 There may be instances where additional information may be kept such as training undertaken or for the purpose of equal opportunities monitoring. These records can be seen by volunteers at any time.
- 10.4 This information and all other personal data are subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be treated in the strictest confidence or accordance with the organisation's data protection policy. Volunteers are informed of their rights, under data protection legislation, to have access to personal data.

11. Settling differences

- 11.1 The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The organisation seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly, and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences.
- 11.2 The designated officer is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct and these should be reported to him/her. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained and acted upon as quickly as possible. The organisation will endeavour to resolve the problem in an informal manner.

12. Rights and Responsibilities

- 12.1 The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:
- know what is expected of them
 - have clearly specified guidelines of support
 - be shown appreciation
 - have safe working conditions
 - be insured
 - know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong
 - be paid expenses
 - be trained
 - be free from discrimination
 - have the opportunity for personal development
 - ensure that you and all others working with and dealing with the organisation are free from discrimination on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, political beliefs, religion, physical or mental disability, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or parental status
 - refuse to carry out any request they consider to be unreasonable

And in return it expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way which reflects the aim and values of the organisation
- work within agreed guidelines and remits
- respect the work of the organisation and its members and not bring it into disrepute
- to comply with the organisation's health and safety policy
- to comply with the organisation's equal opportunities policy