



Independent and Corporate Volunteer Policy

Operational Owner	Education Manager: Helen Ward
Trustee Owner	Fiona Merritt
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Related documents	Volunteer Agreement Volunteer handbook Volunteer role descriptions Volunteer competency checklist and training plan New starter induction process Safer Recruitment policy Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Financial Controls Policy Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy Disciplinary Policy

Approval History

Version	Reviewed by	Amendment History	Approved by	Date
1	Management Sub group	First version	Management Committee	18/2/21
1.1	Emma Hughes	Removal of reference to General Manager	Chair of Trustees	23/09/22

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Susan's Farm recognises the important role independent and corporate volunteers have in the organisation and the diverse skills and experience they bring. It ensures that Susan's Farm understands its responsibilities to volunteers to assure they are properly and safely recruited, have the necessary skills and training to fulfil their volunteer roles and enjoy the experience.

Scope

Trustees, staff, independent and corporate volunteers (henceforth referred to as 'volunteers') and associated members so they are able to access and understand the ethos in which volunteers are engaged in volunteering.

Policy Statement

Susan's Farm CIO seeks to meet the needs of local people through a wide range of social, environmental, educational, recreational and economic activities. Without volunteers, we could not continue this work and they are an integral part of the organisation. Susan's Farm values volunteers for the diverse skills and experience they bring.

Susan's Farm aims to offer volunteers the opportunity to become actively involved in their local community by offering a range of voluntary activities and events, as well as the support to facilitate initiatives of their own. Susan's Farm is committed to helping volunteers find an activity that suits their interests, aims and skills, and to work with each volunteer to enhance their experience. We believe the exchange to be mutual; volunteers contribute to the work of Susan's Farm, and should get a range of benefits in return. Susan's Farm is committed to increasing participation of local people in the development of the organisation, and that they develop personally from their volunteering experience.

This policy aims to:

- 1) Help ensure fairness and consistency across projects and areas so that decisions are made based upon the same principles.
- 2) Ensure that the interests of volunteers are met, whilst bearing in mind the needs and purpose of the organisation and the health and safety of all.

Accordingly, this policy is underpinned by the following framework for high quality volunteering:

1. There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout Susan's Farm that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation.
2. Susan's Farm commits appropriate resources to working with all volunteers, such as money, management, staff time and materials.
3. Susan's Farm is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and actively seeks to do this in accordance with its stated aims.
4. Susan's Farm develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims, objectives, which are of value to the volunteers.
5. Susan's Farm is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.
6. Susan's Farm is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.
7. Susan's Farm has clear, actioned, procedures for introducing new volunteers to their role, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.
8. Susan's Farm takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers.
9. Susan's Farm is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.

This policy shall apply to the involvement of anyone who intends to carry out work on a voluntary basis at Susan's Farm. All Susan's Farm staff shall understand and adhere to the policy.

Types and Roles of Volunteers

Definitions

Volunteering is defined as:

"...any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation."

Volunteering England, NCVO

For the purposes of volunteer management, three categories of volunteer have been identified as follows:

- **Independent volunteers** – Volunteers who do not have an assisted support plan and volunteer either on a regular basis (at least once per fortnight) or at one off events. They will have an informal interview or informal meeting depending on volunteer role and will be supervised on a day-to-day basis by the member of staff running the project/section the volunteer is assisting with. Regular supervision meetings will be set up with each volunteer if they are volunteering on a regular basis.
- **Corporate volunteers** – Volunteers from businesses that volunteer as a group on an ad-hoc basis, and usually as part of the business' social responsibility policy (i.e. not team building). The group will be managed by the member of staff leading the project the group works on. Corporate groups often make a financial donation as part of the project.

A further category of unpaid worker is widely identified, but is not covered by this policy. Care farmers/gardeners are referred to the separate Care Farmers/Gardeners Policy.

- **Care farmers/gardeners** have some form of health and social care need, such as mental health issues, a learning disability or are recovering from addiction resulting in them requiring greater support. Care farmers/gardeners need to provide a reference from a current care provider, such as a recovery agency or third sector organisation. Care farmers/gardeners are primarily managed and supported by the staff member they are working with.

Roles and Responsibilities

Susan's Farm responsibilities

A designated staff member (The Volunteer Co-ordinator) has responsibility for the development and co-ordination of our voluntary activity, including volunteering policies and procedures and the welfare of volunteers. All volunteers will have a designated staff member/volunteer for guidance, support and supervision. Staff responsibilities for volunteers will be explicitly referred to in their job/role description. The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks, or for the organisation to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits. However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

Volunteers' responsibilities

Volunteers' responsibilities are outlined in the volunteer agreement and include the following:

- Be reliable and punctual and notify staff as soon as possible if they are unable to attend a session.
- To uphold Susan's Farm values and comply with our policies and procedures.
- Help staff set up at the start and tidy up at the end of sessions.
- Help to provide a safe environment.

- Work as part of a team and under the supervision of the practitioners.
- Help ensure that equipment is maintained and that anything damaged or dangerous is removed and reported.
- To work within the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy including reporting procedures.

Role Descriptions

Through all of our volunteering roles, we aim to offer purpose, structure and meaningful work to people and help to develop life and work skills that aid recovery or personal development.

Groups of volunteers are organised on a rota throughout the week and vary from two-hour sessions in the farm or gardens through to full days of work on maintenance or site development.

All volunteers are given a description of the role they are to undertake, which can be adapted over time to their role as and when it changes. Volunteers are entitled to a clear explanation of the responsibilities and tasks they will be undertaking during a project or activity. Volunteers are not expected to commit to an activity until they are clear about their obligations. All core volunteer roles have a role description with an associated 'skills' list. The role descriptions will state whether a DBS check is needed.

There are a number of ongoing volunteering roles in different areas of Susan's Farm including administration, catering, the Farm and associated land, and the education centre. Susan's Farm is committed to constantly creating and developing volunteer roles in line with the organisation's need. Through developing role descriptions, Susan's Farm aims to clearly set out the overall aim of the role, specific tasks, skills and qualities needed for the role and expectations of achievements.

Paid work and volunteers

Volunteers are integral to the functioning of the organisation at all levels. There is no clear line to distinguish which functions could only be undertaken by paid staff nor which could be undertaken by volunteers. Some functions can only be undertaken by volunteers (e.g. being a trustee) but most functions can be undertaken by volunteers and due to funding constraints Susan's Farm is very appreciative and dependent on volunteers to ensure continuing ability to deliver its Charitable Purposes.

The nature of contract between the organisation and staff is different to that with volunteers. A volunteer will be asked to sign an agreement about what they can expect and what the organisation expects of them. However, they can leave when they wish and can be absent or turn down assignments without consequence. Staff have a contract which provides them with certain legal rights as an employee and which gives them obligations to do their job at set times and to a certain standard.

It is inevitable that in any area of work some of the same tasks are done by both staff and volunteers, however it is important to maintain a distinction between paid roles and volunteer roles overall. This may be through highlighting some tasks that volunteers never undertake, or by the expectation of commitment (e.g. hours of work not being fixed, length of shift not exceeding a few hours).

In some circumstances paid staff may also be volunteers. In such circumstances it is important for managers to maintain a distinction between the paid and volunteer roles and to be very clear about which times are paid and which are volunteering.

Volunteer Recruitment Process

A variety of online and offline methods are used to recruit volunteers without identified support needs. We use these means to advertise for volunteers locally and take into account the principles of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. The recruitment process also aligns with our Safer Recruitment policy and procedure.

N.B. Care farmers/gardeners are recruited through self-referral, support services and agencies. The organisation actively promotes volunteering to people with additional needs including those with a mental health, learning disabilities or in recovery from addiction.

Our volunteer advertisements explain what we do and the people we benefit. They explain the range of volunteering opportunities we have and highlight the difference a volunteer can make to Susan's Farm and what the individual can gain from volunteering. These are displayed on our website, leaflets and via social media.

The organisation offers support and supervision at a level that meets the needs of each individual which can impact on the number of volunteers that we are able to take on, and the speed at which we are able to start new volunteers. This will be kept under review.

Selection and Screening

Applications

Prospective volunteers are expected to follow the advertised application process. Specific volunteering opportunities will be advertised. An application form is used to ensure we capture contact details, relevant experience or personal qualities, availability, medical information and consent and referee contact details.

Interviews

Upon receiving an initial volunteer application form, if deemed suitable, an informal meeting is organised in which the appropriate Susan's Farm volunteer supervisor will discuss the specificities of the role and what the volunteer would like to achieve, their skills, availability, suitability and how best their potential might be realised. Volunteers will have the opportunity to visit their preferred project or team.

If there is more than one suitable applicant for a volunteering role or where a project requires a higher level of responsibility (especially if the project involves young people or vulnerable adults), informal interviews may be held to assess whether they are suitable for the placement or project.

Successful applicants will be contacted to arrange a firm start date and induction time. The firm start date will be dependent on a number of factors:

References

All volunteers must provide the organisation with two referees on their application form. The Education Manager ensures that all references are taken up before the volunteer starts work. Referees must have known these referees for two years or more.

Information on pre-appointment checks

Volunteers will be required to complete a self-disclosure form which gives volunteers the opportunity to tell us confidentially about any unspent criminal convictions, unprotected spent convictions and cautions, child protection investigations or disciplinary procedures they have on their record. We will only ask for information about cautions or convictions which are not designated as 'protected' under the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#). Applicants should complete self-disclosure forms before interview and bring them in a separate, sealed envelope marked 'Confidential'. These will only be opened candidates who have accepted a conditional offer, and the information inside reviewed as part of our vetting checks. All unopened self-disclosure forms will be securely disposed of.

Volunteers may be asked to undergo an enhanced with barred list check with the DBS ([Disclosure and Barring Service](#)) which is free and arranged via the CVS. Any applicant who is found to be barred will be reported to the police. Any applicant with offences will undertake a risk assessment to account for the nature, seriousness and circumstances of the offence, remorse and evidence of change, any legal constraints (e.g. lost driving license) before a confirmation of the appointment. Copies of DBS certificates will not be taken, but a confidential record of the date the check was completed, the level and type of check, the certificate reference number and the decision to recruit will be added to the volunteer's file.

Disqualification from working with children. For volunteers who will be working with children under the age of 8, this check ensures they have not been disqualified under [section 75 of the Childcare Act 2006](#). This self-declaration will only be requested in the event of provision extending to children aged under 8. Establishing disqualification by association is no longer a requirement.

Health checks

Health checks may be undertaken if the volunteering role demands physical activity. These will not be used to discriminate against people, but will be used to determine whether the volunteer role is suitable for the person, or whether it can be adapted where needed. This may be required for a temporary or long-term health requirement.

Refusing volunteers

Susan's Farm may decide that a volunteer applicant is not suitable for the role available. Should this case arise, we will tell the applicant the reasons and provide feedback to support them to apply at a later date or to another organisation. Should a volunteer decide they do not want to volunteer with us, we may ask for the reasons so that we can improve our recruitment process.

Induction and Training

Induction

Volunteers receive an induction into Susan's Farm and their own area of work using the New Starter Induction checklist. This will include:

- The role of the volunteer
- A welcome pack introducing the Volunteer Handbook
- Introduction to key people
- Important safety information including health and safety, lone working, first aid, fire and evacuation, organisational structure and any relevant policies and procedures.
- Volunteer training needs plan
- Invitations to attend regular meetings where they are able to meet new volunteers, socialise with volunteers from across Susan's Farm, share experiences and make friends.

Training

Susan's Farm believes in the personal development of volunteers through training. There will be opportunities in supervision meetings for volunteers to request training that will enable them to do their role better or help achieve their aspirations. Training needs will be reviewed through regular support and supervision.

Monitoring and Supervision

Susan's Farm is committed to monitoring volunteer progress and providing support that is appropriate to the role and the individual volunteer.

Supervisors

Volunteers are supported by paid staff or Trustees who will undertake the induction, training and supervision of the volunteer. In addition, all volunteers have a mentor/supervisor who supports them in day-to-day tasks, and will be given their contact details. It is the role of staff and Trustees to monitor the welfare of their volunteers and make themselves available and approachable. Supervisors have this role clearly identified in their own job description. They use Susan's Farm Volunteer Supervision Guidelines to structure supervision meetings. These guidelines can be found in appendix 1.

Susan's Farm believes in the potential for volunteers to support other volunteers where appropriate. In such circumstance, the volunteer is given adequate supervision and training to support their assigned volunteer.

Evaluation

Measures are taken to improve the volunteering programme at Susan's Farm. Evaluation questionnaires are given to all volunteers at regular intervals. Efforts are made for these to be completed anonymously, although the anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed. If volunteers do not want their name to be tied to evaluation data, they can opt out of evaluation processes. Once data is received then project reports are compiled with conclusions and recommendations for the future volunteering programme.

Volunteer Recognition

Susan's Farm recognises the work of its volunteers as extremely valuable. Volunteers who work in any capacity are respected and appreciated on a daily basis throughout Susan's Farm. Recognition also comes in the form of structured events, mainly 'thank you' events and our annual volunteer thank you meals.

Expenses

Volunteers cannot be paid for voluntary activity. If working for over 4 hours a day, lunch will be provided.

Expenses, fares, travel costs etc. will be reimbursed if personally paid for by any volunteer evidenced by an original ticket/ receipt, mileage will be reimbursed at HMRC rates. Any request for reimbursement must be approved by someone other than the direct beneficiary as outlined in the Financial Control Policy. Volunteers should discuss any planned expense outlay with their supervisor before incurring costs where possible.

Health and Safety

Susan's Farm aims to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all volunteers and the people they come into contact with. We aim to make volunteers aware of health and safety issues and to minimise the hazards and risks to volunteers to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

All staff, volunteers and visitors are covered by the organisation's Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which will be provided during the induction process and can be found on our [website](#). Volunteers are expected to adhere to this policy.

Volunteers are given the names of the assigned Health and Safety Manager, First Aid and Fire Safety staff members and made aware of the fire evacuation procedure.

Risk Assessments are carried out for all volunteering activities and will be based upon the Susan's Farm model document.

Grievance and Complaints

Susan's Farm strives to offer a fair, high quality service to all volunteers, customers, members, partners and other interested stakeholders. We will do what we can to address the individual's concerns promptly. If a volunteer has any problems, they should talk to their named supervisor. If there are any issues that cannot be discussed with staff then the volunteer should talk to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and they will be advised about how to follow the organisation's complaints procedure as outlined in the Complaints policy available on our [website](#).

Disciplinary Procedure

Susan's Farm set out the standards of conduct expected of all volunteers and staff and provide a framework within which managers can work with volunteers to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and to encourage improvement where necessary.

If the organisation believes that the volunteer is unsuitable for the role they have been placed in, the Volunteer Coordinator will discuss with the volunteer options for adapting the role to suit them. If the role has been adapted a number of times for the volunteer and performance is still unsatisfactory, the volunteer will be asked to cease volunteering.

If there has been misconduct on the part of the volunteer the procedure set out in the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure should be followed.

Harassment

Susan's Farm recognises that harassment is a serious issue should it occur when volunteering and can affect the confidence of volunteers and enjoyment of the volunteering opportunity. Any volunteer who feels they are being harassed should not accept the situation and should make it clear from the outset that this behaviour is unwelcome. In such circumstances volunteers will be encouraged to talk through the issue with their supervisor and should refer to the Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy.

If they feel it is more appropriate to discuss the situation with their named supervisor they are encouraged to do so. The volunteer may elect to have the complaint investigated in the full knowledge that the matter will be dealt with seriously, promptly and with the strictest of confidence.

Equal Opportunities

Susan's Farm Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy will be adhered to at all times during interactions with volunteers and service users. A copy of this can be provided and is on our [website](#).

Susan's Farm is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion of opportunity for all staff members, job applicants and volunteers. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, where individuals are respected, treated fairly and able to give their best and all decisions are based on merit. Please refer to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy for further information. Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of and commitment to this policy.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the insurance policy of Susan's Farm whilst they are engaged in any work in the organisation. The organisation will provide a safe workplace and provide insurance cover against any injury caused by negligence. All volunteers are covered by our employer's liability and public liability insurance.

Confidentiality

All staff and volunteers will be made aware of the Privacy policy which is in line with current GDPR laws when joining the organisation through the staff or volunteer induction process. Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Policy

Susan's Farm prohibits the drinking of alcohol, the taking of drugs or smoking tobacco by volunteers when participating in volunteering activities or anywhere on the premises. Volunteers are informed in their induction that if they arrive under the influence of alcohol or drugs they will not be allowed to participate in volunteering activity. Arriving under the influence of alcohol or drugs may be considered as gross misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed on a 2-yearly cycle.

Appendix 1.

Susan's Farm Volunteer Supervision Guidelines

Supervision meetings may not be appropriate for all forms of volunteer involvement. They do, however, ensure regular opportunity for a two-way conversation. They give the opportunity for a volunteer or supervisor to raise issues which may be personal and confidential. They ensure a common understanding of what is expected and what is happening.

It is an important way of valuing the contribution made by volunteers.

The purpose of volunteer supervision is:

- to provide a regular space for reflection and conversation about the volunteer's role
- to reinforce ethos, policy and practice within the organisation
- to exchange information and feedback relevant to the role
- to raise any personal issues or concerns
- to check out whether the volunteer has particular aspirations/ goals related to their volunteering, and how these can be achieved
- to provide support and affirmation for volunteers
- to ensure that the organisation operates to the best possible standards.

As a supervisor I agree to:

- set aside dedicated time for one-to-one supervision on an agreed frequency
- arrange a suitable environment to meet, minimising interruptions
- be honest, clear, supportive and flexible as far as possible
- Treat personal aspects of the conversation confidentially
- Keep a brief written record of the session

As a volunteer I agree to:

- attend supervision sessions on an agreed frequency
- raise any issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity
- respect the limits and boundaries which affect my volunteer role

Example Supervision Questions

How do you feel about your volunteering generally?

What has gone well?

- anything you are especially pleased about or that you have enjoyed especially?

What has not gone so well?

- Is there anything you are unsure about or that causes you concern?

Are your needs/ aspirations being addressed?

- Do you feel that you are doing too much/too little?
- Are there other roles/ activities you would like to try?

Is there training or additional support that would help you?

How are you getting on with others in the team/with beneficiaries?

Do you have suggestions as to how things could be done better, or differently?

Are there any actions for us to agree, for review next time?