

Scotswood Natural Community Garden Volunteer Policy and Procedures

Date approved: 23 June 2015
Approved by: Board of Trustees
Last Review: September 2024
Next Review Date: September 2025

This policy is for volunteers and staff/members of Scotswood Natural Community Garden (volunteer trustees are not referred to in this policy). The purpose of this policy is to let everyone know how we will treat volunteers within our organisation. Our volunteer handbook works alongside this document, the handbook is given to all new and existing volunteers to let them know what they can expect when they join us.

[Garden Vol Handbook](#)

The policy will define what a volunteer is and how we will recruit, manage and support volunteering in our organisation. Volunteers, staff and members of the management committee will be made aware of the existence and purpose of this policy. Volunteers, staff and management committee members will have ready access to this policy.

As well as this policy there are also other documents that may need to be shared with volunteers and those who involve or manage them in particular the Health and Safety policy and practices. These documents will be made available to the relevant parties and copies will be kept with the staff handbook and in the Policy Documents section of the SNCG Google Drive. Relevant policies are listed within the volunteer and staff induction process documents.

What is a Volunteer?

Volunteering is:

“...An important expression of citizenship and essential to 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”

The Volunteering Code of Practice

The garden welcomes volunteers from the age of 18 (or age 14+ for youth work young leader roles -see also Child Protection Policy). Voluntary roles can be an enormous benefit to an individual's personal development. SNCG recognises these benefits, and is keen to encourage applications from people with little or no experience of the role that they are applying for. Some roles do require some level of previous experience, and all applicants are advised to

contact SNCG prior to making a formal application to discuss their potential role.

1. SNCG's Volunteering Values Based on the Compact Code of Practice

● **Choice**

People must be free to choose to volunteer; no one will be forced to volunteer.

● **Diversity**

Volunteering is open to all, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity or other factors. Further details can be found in SNCG's Diversity and Equality Policy (16).

● **Reciprocity**

In return for giving their time, energy and skills, volunteers expect to gain something – this could include: a sense of worthwhile achievement; useful skills; experience and contacts; sociability and fun; inclusion in the life of the organisation.

● **Recognition**

We will recognise volunteers' contribution to our organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives.

2. The Recruitment Process:

- All volunteers will complete a 'Volunteer Application Form'.
- The application form will also ask volunteers to disclose any 'unspent' convictions under the requirements of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. the online disclosure calculator can be used to check whether convictions are spent if necessary:
<http://www.disclosurecalculator.org.uk/go>
- To minimise the risk of harm or distress to children and adults at risk, SNCG requires the following:

Requirement	Who
2 references, at least one of	All volunteers

<p>which must be verified by a staff member. Ideally references should be from someone who has known the individual for at least 2 years (as outlined in the recruitment policy).</p>	
<p>Enhanced check with barred list check</p>	<p>N/A we do not carry out regulated activity.</p>
<p>Enhanced DBS check</p>	<p>Volunteers working with children or volunteering in a supervisory role with vulnerable adults.</p>
<p>Basic DBS check</p>	<p>All other volunteers, wherever possible -see also Policy 47 SNCG Safeguarding Adults</p>

- DBS checks will be renewed or reviewed using the DBS tracking system every 3 years.
- The most likely reason for needing a DBS check is that the volunteer will have contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. SNCG will pay for the cost of the DBS check. Any DBS that discloses convictions will be risk assessed by the supervising staff member and agreed with the CEO. Having a criminal record will not be a bar to volunteering unless the CEO, Volunteer Staff or trustees of SNCG believe that a conviction means that the applicant is unsuitable. Volunteers should be made aware that the DBS process can take some time to complete.
- In exceptional circumstances a volunteer may not need to have a DBS check before they can start volunteering; this will be with the agreement of the Volunteer Manager (Sean Clay) and/or the Health & Safety Officer (Karen Dobson). New volunteers will always be supervised by a member of Scotswood Garden staff for their first 6 sessions and wherever possible volunteers will work in groups of at least 3 people.
- Once an application form has been received, prospective volunteers will be invited to meet their potential supervisor for a discussion on the volunteer role, its requirements and mutual expectations. This meeting is for both the supervisor and volunteer to see if the volunteering opportunity is suitable. This discussion will be based on the skills and experience required for the role.

- After all the safeguarding checks have been carried out, potential volunteers will be told whether SNCG is happy for the volunteering to go ahead.
- SNCG retains the right to refuse the offer of a voluntary role to any volunteer, for example if any background checks are not satisfactory or if we feel they are not in accord with our core values. We can also refuse a volunteering role if we feel you do not have the skills or experience required.

Induction and Training

All volunteers will receive an induction with their supervisor that will include:

- A full explanation of their role and tasks and the expectations of the organisation;
- An introduction to the team which will include staff, other volunteers and members of the organisation;
- A clear introduction to where they will be based when volunteering and who to go to if they need help or support. An introduction to the building, including any health and safety information relevant to the role. This should include fire safety and personal safety e.g. where to store personal items, toilets and general building layout;
- Additional training and induction for each role will be identified by SNCG Staff.

3. What Expenses will be Paid to Volunteers?

SNCG will reimburse volunteers' reasonable out of pocket expenses. These must be agreed by the volunteer's supervisor in advance and may include:

Travel to the garden from home will be reimbursed up to the cost of making the journey by public transport where possible, if not mileage will be reimbursed at 45p/mile.

Any direct costs undertaken as part of the volunteering role, these must be agreed in advance with the appropriate supervisor.

Specialist health and safety equipment will be provided, where needed e.g. ear defenders.

The volunteer's supervisor will agree reasonable expenses as appropriate to the role. To claim expenses back, volunteers will need to produce a valid bus ticket for travel expenses to be given to their supervisor who will authorise the claim. For any other expenses complete a '**Volunteer Expenses Claim Form**'. Proof of the claim, such as receipts, must be attached to the form. The claim must be authorised by the volunteer's supervisor before reimbursement is given.

4. Acceptable Behaviour

All staff and volunteers shall act in a respectful way towards colleagues, staff, volunteers and visitors at all times. This includes respecting differences of opinion, and refraining from shouting or acting in an aggressive way. Staff and volunteers should be especially careful in their conduct towards children, young people and adults at risk and ensure their behaviour is appropriate and does not include teasing or bullying or exploitation. More information on appropriate behaviour is given in the child protection policy and the safeguarding adults' policy.

5. What if Things Go Wrong in the Volunteer Role?

Volunteers, although valued by SNCG, are not employees and have no contractual obligation to the organisation. If an issue arises the supervising staff member or CEO will speak to and listen to the volunteer, this may lead to agreements about changes in behaviour or expectations which will be monitored and reviewed.

If the staff member or the volunteer feel that there is no resolution to the issues then the volunteer will be asked to leave.

If a serious issue such as theft, violence or a safeguarding issue arises the volunteer will not be given time to change behaviour but asked to leave immediately as they are no longer supporting the aims and core values of the organisation

The volunteer can access the organisation's complaint procedure if they feel they wish to make a complaint: volunteers will be made aware of the policy at induction.

6. Can I Request a Reference?

SNCG values and respects the motivation and skills of our volunteers and will be happy to provide a reference. In order to give an accurate and meaningful reference a minimum of 3 months/12 volunteering sessions is needed to allow us to gain a measure of the volunteers' skills, knowledge and personal qualities.

The reference will be completed by the person managing the volunteer, but approved by the CEO before being sent.

7. Health & Safety

We have a duty to look after the safety and well-being of our volunteers.

This means we will make sure that appropriate precautions are taken to control and manage any significant risks, including having support sessions, training and information about any relevant health & safety policies and procedures.

Like employees, volunteers must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by what they do, or omit to do, while volunteering.

Volunteers must also co-operate with SNCG in carrying out any duty or complying with any requirement imposed by relevant health and safety laws.

Volunteers must not use any power tools or other dangerous tools such as scythes and bill hooks, unless they are authorised to do so. Such authorisation will only be granted following training specific to the tool in question, linked to a safe system of work. Designated protective equipment must be worn when specified in the safe system of work.

8. Insurance

SNCG will indemnify (cover) its volunteers against claims made against them for injury or damage as long as the volunteer:

- a) Acted in good faith and honestly believed that they were acting within their power or duty as our volunteer and;
- b) Lets the Volunteer Staff member or CEO know immediately about any incident which could lead to a claim.

9. Confidentiality & Data Protection

During induction all volunteers will be made aware of their rights and responsibilities under Data Protection law and the importance of respecting the confidential information, particularly in the case of sensitive information about children, young people or vulnerable adults that volunteers may have access to. Volunteers will be made aware of SNCG's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy (14), with particular reference to the taking of photographs while on SNCG premises.

Volunteers must not have access to personal information for colleagues, children, young people or vulnerable adults unless it is deemed necessary by

a senior staff member, for example in the case of a medical condition that staff and volunteers should be aware of, such as diabetes or epilepsy.

Can Volunteering Affect my Benefit Claims?

As legislation varies over time it is always best for volunteers to check the latest information either with their benefits advisor or on the website www.dwp.gov.uk. It is the volunteer's responsibility to do this.

Smoking Policy

It is against the law to smoke or vape in the Garden House at SNCG. The John Marley Site operates a smoke-free campus policy and volunteers, who smoke/vape, should familiarise themselves with the designated smoking areas. There is a no smoking or vaping policy for the Scotswood Natural Community Garden itself.

Gifts

We ask that volunteers do not accept gifts from our members. We realise this is a sensitive issue but any gifts must be given to the supervising staff member, they may be returned to the member or donated to the organisation for redistribution with the member's agreement.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Volunteers must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst volunteering for SNCG. SNCG will not allow the consumption of alcohol on the premises. Where SNCG social events are held off site at licensed premises e.g. the local pub, volunteers are responsible for their own consumption which we recommend to be moderate.

A breach of this policy may result in the termination of a volunteer's role within SNCG.

This Volunteer Policy was adopted by the Board of Trustees of Scotswood Natural Community Garden at their meeting on 23rd June 2015

Signed by

Tony Milan

Chair of Trustees

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Date Reviewed	Amendments	Signed
5/7/16		T Milan
25.7.17		T Milan
23.10.18		S Cole
22/9/21	Agreed that volunteer manager and Karen should look at producing a volunteer handbook.	C Francis
12/10/22		C Francis
4/10/23		PP Kdobson
25/09/24	DBS and application information updated.	H McStravick