

Cornwall Rural Community Charity Volunteer Handbook

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Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome

Thank you for volunteering!

Welcome to Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC). By supporting us as a volunteer, you have joined over 50 others who give us their time and skills. In fact, all 19 of our Trustees are volunteers!

Our work couldn't happen without volunteers like you. Your support helps us to enable Cornish communities to be vibrant, sustainable and inclusive.

Because we value our volunteers so much, we want to make volunteering a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone. This handbook explains how we do that, as well as telling you more about us and about your role as a volunteer.

Thank you for your support.

From all at CRCC



Why volunteer?

Here are some reasons why we think volunteering with CRCC may appeal to you. If you have your own reasons please make sure you tell us so we know what volunteering means to you.

- Be part of an organisation working at the heart of Cornish communities
- Enhance your CV
- Gain experience or use previous experience and skills
- Help others
- Giving something back to your community
- Be involved in an activity you are passionate about
- Build your confidence & self esteem
- Make good use of your spare time
- Meet new people
- Try new things
- Building your skills and experience as a way into paid work
- Stay active
- Have a routine and show your ability to commit to tasks

I am volunteering because:

“

”

If you'd like to, please use this space to make a note of why volunteering is important to you

Introduction

A 'CRCC volunteer' is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of CRCC's operations. They do so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward, except for payment of actual out-of-pocket expenses.

CRCC recognises the importance of volunteering in its work. We aim to support our volunteers so that they and CRCC benefit from volunteers' contributions as much as possible. CRCC believes that our relationship with volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and, while there is no formal agreement or contract, both CRCC and the volunteers have commitments and responsibilities as detailed in this Handbook.

We aim to ensure that volunteers enjoy their involvement with us and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives. Volunteering is a crucial and essential activity; it is not intended as a substitute for paid employment.

The Volunteer Handbook - explained

Welcome to CRCC's Volunteer Handbook – you will have been issued with a copy of this when you first decide to join CRCC as a volunteer. This Handbook will form part of your induction to CRCC and the project or service you have chosen to volunteer with.

This Handbook sets out the following:

- How we recruit volunteers at CRCC
- What you can expect from us
- What we hope you will offer us in return
- An overview of organisational policies that affect your volunteering

Where applicable, volunteers may also be issued with more specific information and policies relating to a particular project or service. This information builds on CRCC's core principles of volunteering set out in this Handbook.

Volunteer Recruitment

CRCC promotes and encourages diversity in its recruitment process. Recruitment processes vary between services but will include as standard:

- Volunteers will be required to register with the service they intend to volunteer with. This information will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- Volunteers may need to undergo a criminal records Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, where appropriate, prior to volunteering. Where children or vulnerable adults are involved, volunteers may need to undergo an enhanced DBS check.
- Volunteers will be placed in activities which match their skills, knowledge and interests.

In addition to these standard processes, some services may also include the following:

- Volunteers may be interviewed and references sought before volunteering is confirmed.
- Volunteers will complete a probationary period as agreed at interview.

Before you begin volunteering, we will ensure you are properly introduced to your chosen volunteer area, including ensuring you understand the role you will be carrying out so that you feel comfortable starting your journey with us.

This is a good time to ask any questions you might have about CRCC, the service or project you will be volunteering with or the role you will be undertaking.

You will be shown how to carry out your role and if the role you will be performing requires any particular training, we will tell you about this at your induction. Most training for volunteers within CRCC is in the form of shadowing experienced volunteers or staff. It is important that you feel you have a role that is appropriate and meaningful.

Where available you may also be given information and guidance specific to the area you are volunteering in.

We will do our best to help and support you to fulfil your role to the best of your ability throughout your time with us. You will have safe working conditions and be insured to carry out your role.

Our commitments to you and what we hope you will offer us in return

At CRCC we believe in the power of collective action. Volunteers can expect the following commitments from us; and we hope you can offer CRCC the same in return:

- To listen, be open and be honest in our communication
- To be compassionate, be kind, courteous and caring
- To recognise, respect and admire each others' skills, achievements and potential
- To respect and admire each others views even when they are different from your own
- To take responsibility for our own actions
- To accept and learn from challenges
- To actively support one another and not engage in any discriminatory behaviour
- To work towards the benefit of others above ourselves
- To be dependable and act with integrity
- To protect the reputation of CRCC, its staff and volunteers in all communication and self presentation

CRCC also asks volunteers to agree to the following:

- Perform their roles to the best of their abilities
- Respect and remain loyal to the values, goals and policies of CRCC and the service that they volunteer with
- Be reliable and show commitment
- Attend training and support sessions as agreed relevant to their position as volunteers
- Volunteers intending to withdraw their services will give as much notice as possible

Introduction to your chosen service area

You have chosen to volunteer with *[this is the name of the project or service you are volunteering with]*

.....

Your named contact within the area you are volunteering with is:

.....

Their telephone number is:.....

Their email address is:.....

If your named contact is on leave or off sick and you have any queries then;

Your alternative contact is:.....

Their telephone number is:.....

Their email address is:.....

You can write to us at:.....

Our website address is:.....

NEXT STEPS: A member of staff from the area you have chosen to volunteer with will take you through this Handbook and any information specific to that area.

Thank you for volunteering with CRCC

Conduct

CRCC needs to have a strong central organisation to make sure that the work it undertakes is done so in a way that is responsible, measured, expert and above all respected.

The seven principles of public life, known as the 'Nolan Principles' have been adopted as CRCC's organisational and volunteering values.

Selflessness: To take decision solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity: To not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their duties.

Objectivity: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, holders of public office, to make choices on merit.

Accountability: To be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate.

Openness: To be open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty: To have a duty to declare any private interest relating to their participation and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: To promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Speaking to the media

CRCC will be known through how it is reported in the media. It must speak with a united voice and so each service has a designated media spokesperson. Only this person will speak on behalf of CRCC or the service to the media and there are guidelines for what they can say, how and when.

Professional conduct

When undertaking any activity in the name of CRCC, volunteers should conduct themselves in a manner that reflects well on CRCC. Our commitments to you and our expectation on volunteers are outlined [on page 7](#) of this Handbook.

Policies Explained

This part of the Handbook is for use as and when you may need to know about CRCC policies. We thought it would be a good idea to put them all in one place so that if you need to refer to them, you know where to find them.

All policies mentioned below appear in summary. If you wish to see policies in full these are available upon request.

Expenses

Volunteers may be reimbursed for reasonable travel costs and out-of-pocket expenses by prior agreement. Mileage costs are paid at the current rate and can only be paid wholly and exclusively for the agreed voluntary work. Other than mileage costs, other expenses can only be claimed by prior agreement. All expenses must be accompanied by valid receipts. Where a project/service has agreed to pay any parking costs, receipts may be obtained via a tear-off receipt on the ticket itself or we will accept a photocopy.

Volunteers can only claim for actual miles travelled. However, where a person genuinely and reasonably returns home between activities then these journeys can be claimed; you cannot claim a return home between activities if you could not have actually or reasonably done so.

Volunteers who need to volunteer all day may claim for lunch by prior agreement with the relevant project manager and only on provision of a complete receipt.

Travel claims can only be made for one return journey per activity. Anyone travelling by train, whether within or out of county, will be paid the equivalent of a 2nd class train fare.

These expenses can only be claimed using a CRCC volunteer expense form that is sent to our office at 2 Princes Street, Truro, or handed in to staff with relevant receipts. Payment is usually made by BACS once a fortnight, so please include your bank details and, if possible, an email address. Cash or cheque payments can be requested but as an exception; please give staff at least 48 hours notice.

All expense claims must be submitted within 6 months of the dates of the activity you are claiming for and within one month of the end of the financial year (ie by the end of April) for claims up to March in any given year. We cannot guarantee that we will reimburse any claim outside of these deadlines due to the constraints of individual project/service budgets.

If you receive benefits / have other, paid work

Volunteering is, by definition, any activity you engage in to benefit others without being paid for it. Volunteers will not personally gain materially or financially for volunteering with CRCC. However, it is usual to receive out-of-pocket expenses.

It is important to remember that if you are in receipt of welfare benefits, housing benefit or council tax benefit you are obliged to notify these departments of any voluntary work you undertake and payments you receive (including travel expenses). Welfare benefits include Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance etc. You are also obliged to let your GP know that you are volunteering if you are not currently working due to illness, even for just a few hours a week, so that you can discuss with him/her the benefits of volunteering to your wellbeing.

CRCC has no responsibility for contacting any welfare benefits departments. You will be asked to sign a Declaration Form to say that you will notify the relevant benefits department.

If you have other work and you are paid for this, you should notify the Inland Revenue of any expenses you receive.

If you would like a copy of the Department for Work and Pension’s information booklet *Volunteering while getting benefits*, please ask a member of staff for a copy or contact your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Declaration Form	
I understand that it is my responsibility to inform any welfare benefits office or the Inland Revenue of the voluntary work that I am doing and any out-of-pocket expenses I am being paid relating to this.	
I also understand that it is my responsibility to let my GP know of any volunteering activity I am engaged in.	
I understand that CRCC has no responsibility to inform these departments on my behalf.	
Name	Signature
Date	
Expenses to be paid by (<i>please tick</i>): BACS <input type="checkbox"/> CHQ <input type="checkbox"/>	

Health & safety

CRCC will do all in its power to ensure your wellbeing and safety whilst volunteering. If you become aware of any potential hazard or unsafe working conditions, you should have no hesitation raising them with your supervisor. You are required to take all reasonable steps to safeguard your health and safety, and that of any other person who may be affected by your actions, and to observe at all times published safety and fire rules and procedures.

All volunteers have a responsibility to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work; to co-operate with us as is necessary to enable us to comply with any health and safety duty or responsibility; and not to interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health and safety.

Lone working

CRCC acknowledges that it has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare at work of its volunteers, and recognises that it has a duty to assess risk to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary.

Some tips to help you stay safe:

- Do not give your home telephone number or address to non project staff
- Do not arrange unnecessary after-hours meetings
- Do not visit clients without informing the project staff first
- Do not enter a house if the person you arranged to meet is not there
- Do not respond angrily to someone who is trying to provoke you
- Do avoid confrontation, do all you can to diffuse a potentially harmful situation
- Do not park in dark areas of streets/car parks
- Do reverse into parking spaces near exits so you can leave quickly if needed
- Do keep all doors locked while driving and keep valuables out of sight
- Do not get into a car with somebody you do not know or trust
- Do look and act assertively
- Do make sure project staff know where you are and if you change your plans
- Do take someone with you if visiting people in premises you are unsure of
- Do leave your mobile phone on whilst on a visit and in view
- Do trust your intuition at all times
- Do keep your personal alarm handy if you carry one

Diversity

CRCC is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all the people, communities, staff and volunteers we work with. It is our expectation that volunteers will work towards the same aims.

Accordingly, project staff will ensure that recruitment, selection, training, and development procedures result in no volunteer receiving less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic, ie race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, trade union membership or non-membership, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, age or on the basis of being a part-time, fixed term worker or volunteer. CRCC's objective is to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and otherwise treated solely on the basis of their relevant aptitudes, skills and abilities.

CRCC seeks to prevent unfavourable treatment, directly or indirectly, to any of these groups in its practice, its governance structure and its service delivery. In addition, we will seek to achieve the broadest representation of the community within our workforce and volunteers.

We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity.

"Diversity is the difference between every human being and every other human being."

Confidentiality

In the course of your volunteering role you may see or hear information about an individual(s) that is sensitive or highly personal. We ask that you respect the right of the individual(s) concerned to the confidential handling of this information.

However, if the individual concerned is a risk to themselves or others the information must be passed on to a senior person within the project team

immediately. You must let the person know, ideally in advance, that information of this nature cannot be kept in confidence. Training on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults (Human Rights Human Lives workshop) is available. Within some services, this training is compulsory for volunteers due to the nature of the work involved.

Similarly, you should respect your own confidentiality and personal safety. It is not a good idea to disclose personal information about yourself, eg where you live, telephone numbers, etc to people you do not know or are unsure of.

Each project or service will have its own confidentiality agreement, which we ask that you sign to say that you understand the need for this policy.

Insurance

All volunteers, whilst carrying out duties for CRCC, are covered under our Public Liability Insurance.

Safeguarding Adults

CRCC has signed up to the Multi-Agency Policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse and Neglect in Cornwall. It has a commitment to ensure all staff and volunteers understand and adhere to the principles and procedures within that policy. For further information on safeguarding adults see www.cornwall.gov.uk/adultprotection.

All staff and volunteers need to be aware of CRCC's commitment to this policy and staff and volunteers who may work with vulnerable adults will be given more in depth training.

The Cornwall Multi-Agency Policy relates to adults of 18 years of age or over. The term "community care services" includes all social and health care services provided in any setting or context. The term "harm" should be taken to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment that are not physical), but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health. It should also be taken to include the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

(Definitions from "No Secrets" – Department of Health, 2000)

If a **disclosure** of alleged abuse is made to a member of staff or volunteer it is not their responsibility to investigate the allegation; they should contact a member of their project team who will then put them in touch with the named Safeguarding Adult Lead Person within CRCC who will take the matter forward in line with the Cornwall Multi-Agency Policy. They will require a certain amount of information

from you which will include details of the person who has disclosed that they have been abused and the person they allege to be the abuser, the type of abuse, where the abuse has taken place and when.

Safeguarding Children

CRCC recognises that when working with children and young people it is their welfare and safety that is paramount and that specific measures are to be taken to safeguard them from any harm.

Before commencing work with children and young people CRCC staff and volunteers will be required to produce evidence of having satisfied the criminal records checks currently prescribed.

All CRCC staff and volunteers will be required to follow a code of behaviour and practice designed to safeguard children and young people from harm.

Any participant under the age of 18 must seek written permission to volunteer with CRCC or attend any activity organised by CRCC.

In the event of any concerns being raised or allegations of abuse being made you should immediately contact a member of the project team who will ask to put you in touch with a trained designated CRCC staff who will be aware of the correct procedure to follow.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 is concerned with how information about living individuals is handled and gives rights of access to the individuals who are the subject of that information. It regulates the way in which certain data about yourself, both in paper and electronic form, is held and used.

In your role as volunteer, we ask that you not access, process or disclose any personal data other than is necessary to carry out the role for which you are engaged in.

When you begin volunteering, you will have provided us with various personal details. You must notify your project team immediately of any change, eg name, address, telephone number, next of kin, etc. CRCC will not be responsible for any issues arising out of your failure to notify changes in your personal details.

Performance Issues and Grievances

Grievances

In the event that you have any complaints or grievances about the service you volunteer with or CRCC, you should in the first instance raise this with the appropriate service manager. If you are still not satisfied with the response you should put your complaint in writing addressed to CRCC Chief Executive, who will investigate the complaint and contact you within 10 working days.

Performance Issues

We hope that we never have concerns about a volunteer's performance or conduct. However, if we do, volunteers will be subject to CRCC's Discipline and Grievance Policy.

The following steps summarises CRCC's process.

1. A chat and a cuppa

Often, grievances are the result of misunderstandings or miscommunication, which may be resolved by talking things through. We would like to be able to resolve any concerns in a informal and friendly manner. Our first step therefore would be for the appropriate service manager to meet with the volunteer over a cup of tea.

If things can not be resolved informally or circumstances are more serious then the service manager will follow this procedure:

2. Informal/verbal warning

Circumstances surrounding the area of concern can be discussed. Should the volunteer wish, they may be accompanied by a friend. Careful notes must be taken, and a time frame for improvement agreed.

3. Written warning

If there is insufficient improvement, or in the case of a very serious offence, a further meeting should be arranged. Following this, a written warning clearly stating what further improvements are expected should be issued to the volunteer. It is very important that everything is fully explained and understood.

4. Dismissal

If there has been no improvement at the conclusion of the previous stages or in the case of gross misconduct, the volunteer can be asked to leave and their volunteering role ended. This must be put in writing to the volunteer within one week, giving reasons and details of the right of appeal. In this case, an appeal must be received within 14 days of the effective date of the letter of dismissal.

The volunteer will not be allowed to continue volunteering pending his/her appeal.

5. Appeal

A right of appeal should be included at every stage and carried out within the agreed time limits. The volunteer, accompanied by a friend if s/he wishes, the service manager and the chief executive should attend the appeal.

CRCC values and actively encourages volunteers' ideas, comments and opinions on the aims and objectives of the organisation. CRCC places great value on our core principles of conduct, as outlined in this Handbook; if a volunteer no longer feels that they are able to demonstrate these principles then we would expect your volunteering role to be suspended.