

Therapy Dogs Nationwide Volunteer Policy

Introduction

Our volunteers come from a range of sources and backgrounds, and their contributions is paramount to the success of our charity.

Our role is to encourage volunteers to not only contribute to our work, but also to get the most personally from doing so. However, we care for vulnerable people and their needs and safety are paramount. Consequently, becoming a volunteer also entails obligations. This policy lays out a framework to support everyone in achieving these objectives.

Staff Responsibilities

Trustees, responsible for

- supporting our volunteer strategy and delivery of the volunteer programme, including thanking and recognition procedures.
- supporting our committees and providing specialist support for volunteering in areas such as fundraising, training, H&SW, HR and finance, and also thanking and recognising our volunteers work.
- managing the full spectrum of volunteer activities and support at establishment level
- providing a tailored induction for each person, which must include data protection and Health & Safety.
- making our volunteers feel welcome, supporting them in developing their experience and ensuring that they are treated fairly.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteers enable us to improve the quality of our services in a way that we would otherwise not be able to do.

Governance and Strategy. Trustees ensure that we are governed well, lead us to maintain high standards.

Fundraising. Volunteers help to raise funds that enable us to purchase services and items that we would otherwise be unable to afford.

Other Roles. The only limit to the range of roles a volunteer might fill is the time that he or she is able to commit and his or her skills and experience. Volunteers may also be employed in administration, facilities and communications.

Recognition

1. There are many reasons why people volunteer their time and skills, and each person has her ~~/his/their~~ of his own reasons, but research has shown that the following are the most common.

- a. Enjoy helping people
- b. Believe the cause is worthwhile.
- c. Have time to spare.
- d. Want to make friends.
- e. Want to use skills.
- f. Would like to learn new skills

2. However, there are also barriers to volunteering, as follows:

- a. Lack of time.
- b. Put off by bureaucracy.
- c. Worry about risk/liability.
- d. The way things are organised (or not).

3. The most common benefits reported by volunteers are:

- a. Satisfaction from seeing results.
- b. Enjoyment.
- c. Personal achievement.
- d. Opportunity to do something they are good at.
- e. Broaden horizons.
- f. Meet people.

Recruiting

Recruiting messaging for volunteers should reflect the above factors and volunteering should be included in the charity's marketing strategy. As part of this, consideration should be given to segmenting the volunteer base. For example, people who volunteer for roles such as manning reception or helping-out at a day club for an hour or 2 are most likely to come from the local community, whereas web or social media volunteers, or similar, may be home based and could be drawn from a wide geographical area. Top tips for volunteer recruitment at [Volunteering Matters](#).

Equally, consider also the most effective recruiting channels. There are no absolutes, but business and professional people are more likely to use LinkedIn, whereas teenagers are more likely to be on Instagram/SnapChat. Don't overlook organisations that advertise volunteer roles at no cost, such as the [Charity Job](#) recruitment site, [Do It, Reach](#) and [ICAEW](#). You can also apply for [media volunteer support](#) through The Media Trust and the recruitment agency [TPP](#) will advertise volunteer roles for free. Or try [Work for an MP](#), which will accept charity ads. If you're London based, you may wish to try [Team London](#).

If you're near a university, many student unions run a volunteering service and/or hold volunteering fairs. Example [here](#).

Retention

We will seek to support each volunteer by recognising what they gain from doing so, minimising the barriers and providing appropriate recognition for their contribution to our work. Volunteers are to be included in recognition systems. Examples may include:

- A letter of welcome signed by the CEO on taking up the role

- Badges can work well.
- Good news stories can be posted on social media or in newsletters, or even as a press release, and help generate useful PR as well.
- There are national and often local volunteer awards, or you could create your own.
- Long service recognition can work well – for example a gold, platinum badge, a hand written thank you from the CEO, thanks in the board minutes or posting on social media or in the newsletter.

And don't overlook the power of simply saying thank you when you meet people who give their unpaid time to our charity.

However, it is very important that whatever the recognition is, that it is something the volunteers genuinely value.

Finance

Any necessary purchases made on our behalf should have the prior approval from the Trustees.

Expenses

Volunteers are entitled to be paid reasonable expenses for costs incurred in accordance with our Expenses Policy. However, they may not be paid or given non-cash benefits, as these may inadvertently create a contract of employment, create tax liabilities or impact on an individual's benefits, if they are in receipt of these. If in any doubt, the advice of the Trustees is to be sought.

Insurance

Your indemnity insurance should be arranged to provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst undertaking voluntary work that has been approved and authorised. However, we are not able to reimburse volunteers items that may be lost or damaged, unless arising from negligence on the part of our staff. For volunteers who are generous enough to use their own vehicles for our activities, their vehicle insurance policy must include business use.

Legal and Administration

Whilst administration is kept to a minimum we must meet specific obligations to protect both volunteers and the vulnerable adults that we care for. Each volunteer is to be given and sign a volunteer agreement or other appropriate document.

Health & Safety at Work (H&SW)

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that anyone who works or visits an establishment receives an appropriate H&SW briefing and, where applicable, training. The actual requirements for each volunteer will vary depending on their experience and the role he or she carries out.

Benefits

People are allowed to volunteer while claiming state benefits, including means-tested benefits such as jobseeker's allowance (JSA), incapacity benefit, income support, and employment and support allowance (ESA). They may volunteer for as many hours as they wish to, but there are specific rules that they must comply with. This [link](#) provides guidance, but rules can change and may depend on circumstances, so the individual should approach their benefit provider for clarification.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Our Equality and Diversity policies are fully applicable to volunteers. Reasonable adjustments are to be made to support volunteers with special needs. We believe that diversity is strength, and value all staff regardless of their age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. We will treat each other with honesty, respect and consideration, and will work together to support each other. We will not tolerate bullying or harassment.

Dispute Resolution

If a volunteer has a concern, this should be raised in the first instance with a trustee. Every effort is to be made to resolve any concern informally. However, if need be, volunteers have the right to use our Grievance and Public Disclosure (Whistle Blowing) procedures.

In respect of breaches of policies or procedures, or inappropriate behaviour by a volunteer, including events in an individual's private life that may impact upon our work, the relevant member of the Trustee Team would remind the individual of the standards required.

Serious or repeated breaches by a volunteer may result the individual being invited to relinquish his or her position. In such an instance the individual may appeal to another Trustee, but must do so in writing within 10 days of being notified of the decision. There would not normally be a need to hold a meeting with the individual, unless it was felt to be appropriate and the individual was willing to attend.

Version Control - Approval and Review

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	Aug 2023	Initial draft approved	Annually

Monitoring and Evaluation

Appropriate objectives are to be built into the annual business plan to monitor and develop the contribution our volunteers make to our work.

Useful Links:

[CC: How to manage volunteers](#)

[Know How Non-Profit: volunteers](#)

[Acas: Volunteers, internships, work placements](#)

[Institute of Volunteering: Research](#)

[Gov.uk: Volunteer placements, rights, expenses](#)

[A4Aid: Online legal health check](#)

[FR: Fundraising with volunteers](#)

[Volunteering matters](#)