

A Guide for Volunteers

Welcome to the Volunteer Centre Dorchester. We cover most of the Dorset area except Weymouth, Bournemouth and Poole who have their own Volunteer Centres.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering. We hope that any volunteering you become involved in will be interesting, rewarding and enjoyable.

You will be part of a large team of volunteers who really make a difference to the quality of people's lives and to the quality of services provided by volunteer involving organisations.

What can you expect from your Volunteer Centre?

Each of the volunteer centres across the country has its own unique range of volunteering opportunities. However, all Volunteer Centres accredited by Volunteering England provide the following services for their volunteers.

Advice

All potential volunteers will receive impartial advice on the opportunities available and appropriate to them. Such advice will consider any barriers to volunteering (such as lack of transport or accessibility of building for people with a physical disability). Where barriers are identified, the Volunteer Centre will work with the volunteer and the organisation towards achieving a solution that is acceptable for everyone.

Support

Your Volunteer Centre provides a point of contact for advice, information, support and training, as required. If you have any problems with, or questions about your volunteering or would like to volunteer in a different situation, do please contact us.

Confidentiality

Any information supplied by you will be kept confidential. Relevant details will be passed to the organisation with which you want to volunteer **only** with your permission.

What can you expect from the Organisation you volunteer with?

Voluntary organisations ought to offer the following,

Induction

You should be given an initial induction to the organisation, an explanation of your volunteering activities and an introduction to your staff contact.

Training

Training to perform your role should also be offered.

Confidentiality

Only relevant personal information should be requested from you. You should be told why it is needed. All information should be kept confidential.

Expenses

As a volunteer you should have all reasonable out of pocket expenses reimbursed, such as travel or mileage cost to your placement and any car parking costs.

Equality of Treatment

There should be no discrimination on grounds of age, disability, race, gender, sexuality, history of illness, marital, employment, financial or social status.

Health and Safety

You should not volunteer in unsafe or unhealthy conditions. The organisation you volunteer with should have a Health and Safety policy that should be displayed or shown to you when you start volunteering. If the organisation does not have a policy please let us know.

Reviews

You should have a review with your key contact. This is an opportunity for you to raise any concerns or problems you may have and allows time for you to discuss whether your volunteering placement is right for you.

Insurance

Volunteers should be adequately insured by the organisation they are volunteering with.

References

Most organisations will give you a reference on the basis of your volunteering activity.

What is Expected of You as a Volunteer?

Commitment and Reliability

Try to give a clear indication of the time you can offer the organisation – don't over commit yourself. You should give as much notice as possible if you are unable to carry out your volunteering duties at any time or plan to be away for any reason.

Equal Opportunities

Organisations and their volunteers aim to treat other people with respect and ensure that there is no discrimination, abuse, harassment or bullying of colleagues (fellow volunteers or paid staff), clients or members of the public.

Confidentiality

It is essential that any personal information you learn about individuals must not be disclosed to anyone outside the organisation without the permission of the person concerned. You may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Health and Safety

It is important that you comply with the organisation's Health and Safety Policy, observing any specific requirements of your volunteering and that you do not take any action that might put you or any other person at risk of injury or harm.

You should always advise the organisation's Health and Safety officer of any potential hazard or of any situation that you feel puts you or any other person at risk.

Your Rights as a Volunteer

Volunteer Centres believe that everybody has the right to volunteer, and as a member of Volunteering England we actively support this principle and work to ensure that everybody wanting to volunteer has access to volunteering opportunities. Clearly, not everybody is suited to every type of voluntary activity, so there needs to be some sort of selection procedure. However, the organisation should only take relevant criteria into account when making a decision about suitability for a particular role. For example, a past criminal conviction should only be taken into account if it is relevant to the intended voluntary role.

If you feel you have been discriminated against then contact your Local Volunteer Centre.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Your Volunteer Centre

- Is an Equal Opportunities Organisation
- Values the diversity of the local community
- Believes that its work is enriched and strengthened by drawing on that diversity
- Is committed to promoting diversity and quality of opportunity

Volunteers in receipt of Benefits

Guidance from the Employment Service states that benefits such as JSA, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance will not usually be affected as long as you do not receive any payment other than expenses from volunteering and you are available for a job interview if called.

Volunteer Centres Support the Volunteers Charter

Every individual should have the right to volunteer. Volunteers have rights that should be met in the course of volunteering. Volunteering is a legitimate activity in its own right and not a substitute for paid work.

- Volunteers should have a clear idea for the tasks they are being asked to perform and of the responsibility that goes with those tasks.
- Volunteers should be told who is responsible for their support and supervision.
- They should have regular access to this person and the person should ensure that each volunteer is given adequate support.
- Access to, and participation in, the decision-making process of the groups/ organisations that any volunteer support, should be available to them. This is to ensure fair representation of the needs and interests of all volunteers.
- Volunteers should be protected against exploitation of their interest both as individuals and volunteers. Volunteer should not be put under any moral pressure to undertake activities that go against their principles.
- Volunteers should be adequately protected against any risks that may arise from undertaking voluntary activity. Public Liability Insurance must for instance, cover volunteers.
- Volunteers should not suffer financially by volunteering. They should receive out of pocket expenses and be provided with appropriate equipment/tools/materials to enable them to carry out their voluntary tasks.
- Volunteers should not be used to undertake tasks currently, or previously, undertaken by paid workers. The relationship between paid workers and volunteers should be complementary and mutually beneficial. Paid workers in and organisation should be fully aware of the areas of activity undertaken by volunteers and of the responsibilities of both themselves and volunteers.
- Volunteers have the right to join a Trade Union relevant to the activists in which they are involved.
- Volunteering should be a fulfilling experience. Through the provision of adequate support and supervision, volunteers should be able to develop their interests and skills, expand and change their areas of activity and enhance their life experience.

Some 'Do's and 'Don'ts for Volunteers

Do think about why you want to volunteer.

Don't start volunteering until you know exactly what is expected of you.

Do ask the organisation where you will fit in.

Don't over commit yourself.

Do make sure you know who you are responsible to and who you can go to for help and advice.

Don't leave without telling anyone first. If you don't feel that your volunteering is providing the experience that you want, speak to your key person; they may be able to find a solution.

Do accept reimbursement for any out of pocket expenses you have incurred while volunteering. You can donate the money back if you don't need or want it.

Don't accept money as payment from someone you have helped while volunteering. Explain to them that they can make a donation to the organisation if they wish to do so.

Do keep to any arrangement you have made. If you cannot keep an appointment, or you are going to be late, tell the volunteer organiser or the person you are visiting in plenty of time.

Don't betray any confidences entrusted to you as a volunteer.

Do tell the organisation about any health problems that may affect your volunteering.

Do keep in touch with your Volunteer Centre

Do enjoy yourself

Do tell your friends about your volunteering

Outreach points

West Dorset drop-in sessions contact 07918639012 or 01305 269214

Bridport areas every Wednesday. Sherborne area every Thursday.

Dorchester areas every Monday. Other areas by appointment.

North Dorset drop in sessions contact 07918639011 or 01305 269214

Sturminster Newton every Monday. Blandford every Tuesday. Gillingham every Thursday. Shaftesbury first Tuesday in the month.

East Dorset please call 07552122710

Purbeck please call 07552122708

Main office

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