

NOCS (New Opportunities in Community and Support) Charity Volunteer Policy

This volunteering policy is a framework for the NOCS volunteer programme. It helps define the role of volunteers within NOCS, and how they can expect to be treated. It aims to:-

- demonstrate NOCS's commitment to its volunteer programme and its individual volunteers.
- ensure consistency and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly.
- ensure volunteers know how they can expect to be treated, and where they can turn to if they feel that things are going wrong.
- ensure that senior management and trustees fully understand why volunteers are involved, and what role they have within the organisation.

Recruitment of volunteers, including equality and diversity

The relationship of a volunteer to NOCS is one bound by trust, mutual understanding and benefit; with time given freely and willingly, without expectation of financial reward by the volunteer. Neither NOCS nor the volunteer regard the relationship as a contract of employment.

No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on the volunteer to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time or carry out the tasks provided. Likewise NOCS cannot be compelled to provide regular work or benefit for any activity undertaken.

The relationship is based on the principle that volunteers both benefit from development of skills and training, and add value to the work done by NOCS Charity by performing a wide range of roles, and by contributing any specialist skills and a flexible approach. The Volunteer Programme consists of two levels. Firstly, Volunteers who are required to complete training and an enhanced DBS check prior to starting the role. Secondly, Game Leaders who will be supervised and supported by the GM and Volunteers as part of the charity's objects.

Although Volunteers and Game Leaders offer time freely and willing and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability.

NOCS is an equal opportunities Charity where both members and volunteers are equally likely to have vulnerabilities and need for sensitive consideration. The volunteer programme in large part embodies development of the objects of the charity. For this reason the GM will determine suitability for both Volunteer and Game Leader status in conjunction with Trustees, members, parents and other volunteers as appropriate.

Volunteer recruitment from outside of NOCS will inevitably attract some with ulterior motives as our members are predominantly vulnerable adults and youngsters

therefore we need to be rigorous and cautious in recruitment. Therefore NOCS will not use open advertising to recruit volunteers. Our members need to be able to interact safely, happily and developmentally therefore any potential Volunteers should be already active with the community and able to play relevant games. Therefore part of the recruitment process will include supervised interactions with the membership whilst **an enhanced DBS check** is being completed. This will also ensure that members, other volunteers etc... have the opportunity to observe the potential Volunteer in order to provide an informed contribution to discussion about recruitment.

Induction and training

Once recruited, new Volunteers will be made to feel welcome and will be provided with an informal induction by the GM &/or the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers will undergo an introduction to the Charity's objects and be given a copy of this policy.

NOCS Objects:- The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit of people in Dorset who are socially and economically excluded**i on grounds of their autism spectrum condition (ASC), including Asperger syndrome; or mental ill-health, who experience high levels of social anxiety and difficulties with social interaction, by providing:

- Structured opportunities to develop and gain social and communication skills through the medium of games in a range of weekly clubs open to all.
- A drop-in centre with facilities to socialise and develop friendships, and from which to access information on local services and support with job seeking.
- Volunteering and employment opportunities.
- Outreach work in the community.

Whilst the drop in sessions only require 1 Volunteer or the GM, all clubs* require a minimum of 2 Volunteers/GM, all with successfully completed Safeguarding L2 certification and at least one with successful First Aid certification. Therefore Volunteers will also be required to complete the following training in order to be able to carry out their responsibilities. NOCS will pay for all training and DBS costs.

1. High Speed On-line Safeguarding Level 2
2. High Speed On-line Workplace First Aid Level 1
3. High Speed On-Line Health and Safety Level 1

Volunteers will be expected to oversee, provide guidance for the Game Leaders and advise them of any Health and Safety risk assessments that are necessary to carry out their activities. They will be shown the Risk Assessment Information for the Clubs which is stored in the Policy Cabinet in the NOCS office during induction.

Volunteers are required to model the shop etiquette and, when necessary, remind members of it. The club rules are displayed in the shop to be certain everyone is aware of them. A run through of the etiquette will be given during induction.

Each Volunteer will need to read and sign to show that they understand the Safeguarding Policy. This will also be introduced and shared during induction and each Volunteer will have their own copy of the policy for future referral.

Induction will also cover the signing in procedure for clubs, instruction on use of the Accident and Incident book and membership form completion.

Expenses

In the unlikely event that expenses are incurred, volunteers will need to have agreed the need for the expense with the GM or Volunteer Coordinator ahead of the expenditure and should provide a receipt in order to claim back the expense.

Supervision and support

NOCS has a duty of care to all its volunteers. Should any volunteer be involved in any accident or incident that leaves them in anyway disturbed, they need to notify the GM directly after the incident has been resolved so that counselling or other appropriate support can be arranged as soon as possible.

NOCS respects volunteers by both listening to and learning from what they have to say, supporting a two-way dialogue between the GM, Volunteer Coordinator and volunteers.

Volunteers will be supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator &/or the GM and are encouraged to discuss progress with them on a regular basis. This provides an opportunity to monitor their contribution, establish whether the volunteer would like to change their current contribution, and ensure that they feel valued and satisfied with their volunteering.

All volunteers are free to end their involvement at any time. Wherever possible, an end date should be agreed between volunteer and the GM &/or Volunteer Coordinator who may want to hold an exit interview to find out why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether the volunteer may want to be involved again in the future.

Health and safety

See Induction and Training section.

Health and Safety officers are:

1. The Volunteer Coordinator
2. The GM
3. Byron Quayle, on behalf of the trustees

Names can be found on the wall mounted chart in the NOCS Office.

Confidentiality and data protection

All Volunteers will be advised of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information which is not public knowledge.

Personal information recorded about volunteers will be stored and maintained with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality and will not be shared with third parties without the written permission of the volunteer.

Problem solving and complaint procedures for volunteers

NOCS aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The GM &/or the Volunteer Coordinator are responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints and NOCS actively supports the GM and the Volunteer Coordinator by providing relevant training when needed. The GM and the Volunteer Coordinator will seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for positive and amicable solutions.

Should a volunteer for any reason feel the need to seek assistance in dealing with any problems, they should in the first place discuss the issue with the GM. If satisfaction is not forthcoming then together the GM and the volunteer should approach one of the trustees for assistance in making any necessary decisions etc...

Associated Policies:-

- NOCS Health and Safety Policy
- NOCS Safeguarding Policy
- NOCS Equal Opportunities Policy
- NOCS Whistleblowing Policy
- NOCS Conflicts of Interest Policy

Review

At least annually and to reflect any new legislation to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose and current.

Reviewed and updated January 2024. See Minutes 10/01/24.

^{i **} 'socially excluded' in this context means being excluded from society, or parts of society, including access to employment, as a result of disability (autism spectrum condition) or mental ill-health.