



# Volunteer Policy

## Amendment History

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May 2006	Updated

Reviewer:

Volunteer Development Worker

Owner and Authorised by:

Chief Executive and Executive  
Committee



## Introduction

Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS) is the umbrella body for local voluntary and community groups working in Southampton. We provide a wide range of services including specialist support, advice and training to our membership organisations. We also provide and promote information to individuals and organisations on volunteering in the city.

SVS is committed to involving volunteers in all its work, as we believe that their distinctive and valuable contribution enables us to enhance what we do in delivering a range of quality services and in our primary role of “Promoting Voluntary Action” and volunteering.

Volunteers and voluntary action are at the heart of the organisation and we welcome the involvement of volunteers in all aspects of our work to enhance and extend the work which is undertaken by our paid staff.

As an organisation, SVS strives to meet the standards of best practice involving volunteers which are set by the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) quality standard managed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Best practice is overseen by the Volunteer Development Worker and owned by designated staff members with volunteer involvement responsibilities.

While a large amount of our volunteering opportunities require a regular time commitment for a minimum period, we often look for temporary assistance with short term projects and one off events. We therefore try to accommodate people who only have a limited time to spare or those who have irregular availability. Within our resources we also offer some volunteering opportunities where volunteers can be supported to perform their role, which include those within our supported volunteering project ‘Community Roots’.

As part of our commitment to support the personal development of our volunteers, we encourage volunteers in all areas of our work to learn about and understand the work of an infrastructure support organisation such as SVS. Specific information is provided to volunteers to as part of an induction.

## Our Commitment to Volunteering

**Choice** - Volunteering is undertaken as a matter of free choice. Volunteers are not obliged to undertake tasks they are not comfortable with.

**Inclusion** - Volunteering is open and accessible to all with fair, simple and consistent processes. Volunteers have influence in how things are organised.

**Support** - Volunteers are appropriately introduced to their role and provided with ongoing support and training appropriate to their individual needs, abilities and skills.

**Safety** - The safety and wellbeing of all volunteers is regularly reviewed and adequate insurance is in place. Volunteers are made aware of how to raise concerns and how they will be handled.

**Reimbursement** - All volunteers are appropriately and promptly reimbursed for their travel and other agreed out of pocket expenses incurred whilst carrying out their role.

**Reward** - Volunteers receive appropriate recognition for their efforts and often hear the words “thank you”.

## Becoming an SVS Volunteer

### Advertisement

SVS promotes its volunteering opportunities on the national volunteering website [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk), our own website [www.southamptonvs.org.uk](http://www.southamptonvs.org.uk), as well as at other key places depending on the volunteer role. We advertise our opportunities in line with our commitment to Diversity and Equal Opportunities, targeting campaigns to minority, disenfranchised or hard to reach groups and within our resources will ensure accessibility to the information.

### Volunteering Enquiry

The relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader will make contact with individuals who express an interest in a volunteer role in the organisation within 10 working days of their enquiry and will arrange an opportunity to discuss the role in full. At this point individuals will be provided with a copy of the **Volunteer Policy**, if they have not already received it and they may be asked to complete a Volunteer Application Form to formalise an expression of their interest. The information recorded on an application form is treated as strictly confidential and stored in compliance with the **Data Protection Act 1998**.

### Screening and Selection

The process for screening and selection will depend on the nature of the volunteering opportunity and the next step will involve either a formal interview, informal interview or a taster session. At this first point, time will be given to explore the motivations for the individual wishing to volunteer. All formal interviews which take place will include at least one of either the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker. During an interview, we will seek some basic information about the prospective volunteer as well as ensuring that the placement will match the volunteer's skills, experience and interests with SVS essential needs and requirements.

For the majority of volunteering opportunities, two references will be required and volunteers will not commence unsupervised within a volunteering opportunity until these references have been received and are satisfactory. References will be accepted from current or previous employers, or character references from those who know the individual, though providing this is not a close relative. It is not our intention to put up any barrier for those who may find it difficult to provide details of referees and urge any prospective volunteer for whom this may be the case to seek advice from the Volunteer Development Worker, relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader.

Some of the volunteering opportunities offered at SVS may require professional, technical or other qualifications. For these roles, volunteers will need to provide evidence of relevant qualifications or have independent confirmation of their experience.

In circumstances where a volunteer role involves performing activities with children, young people under the age of 18, or those which would deem an adult to be vulnerable, the volunteer will be advised that a criminal records check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS check) will be required as part of the screening process for the role. The volunteer will be asked to provide identity documents and other relevant information to complete the check. Where possible, this will include at least one of the following primary

identity documents, along with two trusted government documents (i.e. Marriage/civil partnership certificate, HM Forces ID card) or current and valid financial and social history documents (e.g. Bank or building society statement, Utility bill P45 or P60).

- Primary identity documents:
  - Any current and valid passport
  - Birth certificate (issued at the time of birth)
  - Current driving licence / provisional licence (photo card and counterpart)
  - Biometric residence permit

The volunteer will be given appropriate assistance in the completion of the Disclosure application form. Should the prospective volunteer be someone who has not resided in Great Britain long term, we will endeavour to obtain information about any criminal convictions or proceedings in countries outside the UK, though depending on resources available to meet the charges of such investigations. The volunteer will be invited to look at other suitable volunteering opportunities within the organisation which do not require a DBS disclosure, or alternatively if there is nothing available, offered a one-to-one appointment with a member of the Volunteering Team to find a suitable opportunity externally.

SVS does not preclude people who wish to volunteer who have previous criminal convictions, but will look at each individual situation objectively and fairly without compromising its legal duty of care, taking into account:

- The relevance of any offence in relation to the proposed volunteering opportunity
- The nature of the former offence(s) and the seriousness of them
- The time when the offence(s) occurred and whether there has been any pattern of offending
- The age and circumstances of the applicant at the time of the offence(s)
- Whether there has been any significant change of circumstances

## **Diversity & Equal Opportunities**

SVS is committed to the principles of diversity in all areas of its work. We are keen to ensure that our volunteers are representative of the community and the people who use our services. All abilities, backgrounds and needs are recognised, valued and respected as making a positive contribution to the work that we do. We are committed to monitoring and regularly evaluating our progress towards achieving diversity in all our staff including volunteers and expect volunteers to subscribe to the principles and practices of the ***Equal Opportunities Policy***. In considering potential volunteers SVS will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability or health condition, faith, race or ethnic origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

## **Volunteer Role Description**

To ensure that our volunteers are clear as to what is expected of them and to ensure that the volunteers' roles are interesting, challenging and ultimately rewarding, all volunteers will receive a written Volunteer Role Description describing their role and related tasks before commencing volunteering. For some roles it will be possible for the volunteer to build on their role once their confidence and experience has grown.

Each Volunteer Role Description will include the following:

- The volunteer's role title
- The function / purpose of the volunteer role
- A list of tasks / activities envisaged for the role
- Times / days for activities to take place
- Place of volunteering activity

In some cases a Person Specification will be given, listing the skills and experience which are essential or desired for the role.

## **Whilst Volunteering at SVS**

### **Induction**

Before taking up the voluntary placement, all volunteers in addition to receiving a copy of this policy will be guided through all relevant materials, policies and procedures.

Volunteers will undergo a period of induction which will include:

- An orientation of the place of volunteering
- Showing volunteers where and how to use any relevant equipment
- An introduction to relevant staff and volunteers
- Advice of the log on practice to IT (where appropriate)
- Information on the structure of the organisation
- A review of the Volunteer Role Description
- An identification badge
- A discussion around times and dates of volunteering, trial period arrangements and any immediate training needs.

### **Trial Period**

To ensure that the organisation and the volunteer are compatible, all volunteers will have an initial trial period. The length of this trial period will be agreed according to the time commitment of the volunteer and depending on the nature of the role. Any issues which arise during the trial period should first be discussed with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker with a view to resolving them quickly and to the satisfaction of all those concerned. However, should the volunteer not be best suited to the particular voluntary role, support will be given to find another suitable volunteering opportunity, either within the organisation or externally. Likewise, should the volunteer consider that the organisation or the volunteering opportunity does not fulfil their requirements, they may be able to withdraw from the role without fear of embarrassment.

### **Identification**

SVS involves a number of volunteers at different times and in multiple volunteer roles, we therefore require volunteers to wear an identification badge at all times during their volunteering activity. Identification badges will be provided to volunteers as part of the induction process. They can be left with reception when a volunteer is not requiring them and if they go missing, this should be reported to the relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader who will arrange for a new badge to be provided.

### **Training**

Training will be provided to all volunteers to ensure that they are competent in completing their voluntary role. If a volunteer believes that there is training which would support them in performing their role, they should discuss this with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker. There is an expectation that volunteers will attend any training which is specific to their role or project for which they are supporting.

## Support and Supervision

SVS is committed to ensure its volunteers are correctly supported and supervised while volunteering with the organisation. Each volunteer will be informed of their direct Line Manager and relevant paid staff who will support them in their role. Volunteers must be willing to accept directions by relevant paid staff of the organisation and to abide by the organisation's policies and procedures during their involvement with the organisation. Any operational issues should be raised as they arise.

All volunteers involved with SVS will be supported through regular supervision meetings with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker. These are in place to accommodate an opportunity for effective 'two-way' communication between the volunteer and the relevant staff member. A specified time will be set aside for this, which where possible will be mutually agreed. For some SVS projects, these sessions may be offered on a group basis, but in these cases volunteers are welcome to request an occasional one-to-one meeting if they think that this would be beneficial.

During supervision meetings the staff member and the volunteer will discuss the following:

- Reflection on previous volunteering activity
- Acknowledging successful work
- Any matters of concern
- Reviewing and monitoring the current voluntary activity
- A plan future activity
- Any training relevant to the volunteer's role, or raising any training needs
- Reimbursement of any out-of-pocket expenses
- Providing written references
- Any developments or changes to a Volunteer Role Description
- Health and Safety
- Any appropriate tools or equipment required to enable a volunteer to carry out their role

## Payment of Expenses

SVS believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis and is committed to meet, within the resources available, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers. These include:

- Travel between home and place of volunteering activity which includes:
  - Public transport allowance—If travelling by bus or train, the ticket must be retained and given to the relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader when submitting expenses. Public transport from outside the City should first be discussed and agreed with the Volunteer Development Worker, Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader beforehand.
  - Petrol / Mileage allowance – If the volunteer is using his/her own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept. The mileage allowance will be concurrent with the general SVS staff mileage allowance, which

For Cars and Vans:	45p per mile
For Motor cycles:	24p per mile



If a journey is in excess of 10 miles (round trip) volunteers are required to check arrangements with the Volunteer Development Worker, Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader beforehand.

- Contribution towards childcare and other care allowance will be considered on a case by case basis after 3 months of a volunteering relationship, within the resources available, by the relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader and the Volunteer Development Worker.
- Contribution towards any parking charges incurred during a period of volunteering activity. Volunteers are encouraged to seek the cheapest appropriate parking and at times where their volunteering activity takes place at the Voluntary Action Centre, to seek a space within the organisations car park at first before seeking alternative parking.
- If volunteering longer than five hours in any one period, a subsistence allowance of up to £3.00 will be paid. Receipts for items purchased must be retained and produced together with a completed SVS Expenses Claim form.

All expenses are paid retrospectively, unless otherwise agreed, after submission of expenses at the end of each month. SVS recognises that not all volunteers wish to accept re-imburement of expenses, but request that in these circumstances, volunteers claim expenses and donate this back to the charity, using the governments Gift Aid scheme for registered tax payers where able. This should be discussed with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker.

## **Recognition**

SVS is committed to demonstrating its support to all its volunteers and will take opportunities to show our recognition and appreciation. This may include arranging “thank you” events; holding special events during Volunteers’ Week; or nominating volunteers for the local Volunteer Certificate Scheme for those volunteers who have contributed over 100 hours of high standard voluntary work.

SVS is committed to providing references to volunteers who have completed more than 50 hours of volunteering with the organisation, or in circumstances where this has been agreed with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader. A full reference can be provided during an ongoing volunteering relationship, or for up to 2 years after the volunteer has left the organisation. References are provided by the Volunteer Development Worker following consultation with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator / Team Leader which will take place upon receiving a reference request, or as part of an exit procedure for volunteers, whichever comes first.

## **Ending Involvement**

SVS believes that it should not be an embarrassing experience for a volunteer to say that they wish to stop their involvement with us. It is appreciated that there are many reasons why volunteers move on and SVS appreciates the opportunity to hear the volunteer’s views during an exit interview. This helps towards the ongoing development of our volunteer involvement and reviewing our current practices, procedures and policies.

When a volunteer wishes to leave, it is appreciated if reasonable notice is given to the relevant Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader. They will then go through an exit procedure with the volunteer, ensuring all pieces of work are handed over, any relevant materials are returned to the organisation and an exit interview is completed. In cases where a volunteer feels uncomfortable about completing exit procedures with the Volunteer Coordinator or Team Leader the volunteer may request to complete exit procedures with the relevant Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker respectively.

## **Problem Solving**

While the involvement of volunteers within SVS is usually a positive experience for all, occasionally events may arise that lead to concern. This may be between one volunteer and another volunteer, or between a volunteer and a member of staff or the organisation itself. Sometimes it may be because a staff member has noticed that a volunteer is not adhering to their Volunteer Role Description, or someone has complained about a volunteer's work, attitude or conduct.

Volunteers have no legal entity in law and subsequently, whilst they receive the same legal rights as any member of the public in relation to, for example Health and Safety, Data Protection and the Protection from Harassment legislation, they receive no protection under Employment or Equal Opportunities law. SVS endorses the good practice of treating volunteers as if they are protected under law and to help compensate for this lack of rights, we feel it is important that our volunteers have a process in which concerns or complaints may be raised. The process ensures that volunteers are treated fairly and are not discriminated against, particularly in regard to equal opportunities. SVS believes it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with quickly, fairly, transparently, confidentially and with consistency.

**If a volunteer has a complaint about SVS, a member of staff, a client or another volunteer:**

### **Stage 1 (orally)**

We expect that most matters can be dealt with informally before they become a problem, but if this is not possible, the volunteer should discuss the issue with their Line Manager as soon as possible.

### **Stage 2 (in writing)**

If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, then it should be made formally in writing to the volunteer's Line Manager. If the complaint is against the Line Manager then the volunteer should request a meeting with the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive.

If the matter is unresolved at this point, then this should be explained in writing by the volunteer and sent to SVS' Chief Executive. A report will be prepared by the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive and sent to both the Chief Executive and the volunteer. The matter will normally be dealt with within 20 working days from when the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive met with the volunteer and the volunteer will be informed of the Chief Executive's decision.

### **Stage 3 (right of appeal)**

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome then they can appeal to a member of SVS' Executive Committee who will normally respond within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The volunteer will be informed of the Executive Members' decision.

## **If there is a complaint regarding the volunteer:**

### **Stage 1 (orally)**

We expect that most matters can be resolved informally, as many incidents are due to inexperience or training needs. Sometimes however the problem may have arisen due to more serious matters such as the volunteer not fitting into the team, being unreliable, unable to meet the required standards when undertaking tasks or the role is not appropriate for the volunteer.

### **Stage 2 (in writing)**

Where informal measures are not enough, the Line Manager will raise the issue in a formal meeting, usually within one-to-one supervision with the volunteer. The volunteer will be given the opportunity during this meeting to express their opinion and state their side of the matter. If it is felt necessary an informal warning may be issued, with steps to improve and conduct agreed which will be recorded on the volunteers file.

If the issue is unresolved satisfactorily at this stage, a meeting involving the volunteer, the Line Manager and the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive will be arranged as quickly as possible. This may result in a formal warning, with the understanding that following another warning, the volunteer will be as a last resort, asked to leave, considered for another more suitable volunteering opportunity within SVS, or supported by the Volunteering Team to find an alternative role within another organisation.

In the rare circumstances when it is believed that a volunteer has committed a serious breach of one of the organisation's Policies or Procedures, or behaved in a manner that has or could have seriously affected SVS as an organisation, its' employees or volunteers, they will be immediately suspended while the matter is investigated by the Line Manager and the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive.

A meeting will be arranged as quickly as possible between the volunteer, the Line Manager and the Volunteer Development Worker or Deputy Chief Executive. At this meeting the volunteer will be given the opportunity to put their case, either in writing or verbally. The volunteer may elect to bring a supporter (e.g. another volunteer, member of staff or a friend) with them to this meeting, who may advise them, but not speak on their behalf unless invited to do so. If a decision cannot be reached at the end of this meeting, then it will be made within 10 working days of the meeting taking place and given in writing to the volunteer. If the complaint against the volunteer is upheld, they will be excluded from volunteering from SVS and the Volunteering Team will support the volunteer to find a role with another organisation, if they so desire.

### **Stage 3 (right of appeal)**

A volunteer may appeal in writing against the decision to the Chief Executive and you will receive a response within 10 working days. If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome then they can appeal to the Chair of the Executive Committee who will normally respond within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

## Miscellaneous

### Display Screen Equipment Use

If it is necessary for a volunteer to use a VDU (visual display unit) habitually on a regular basis to perform their role, a free eye examination may be considered after 6 months of a volunteering relationship. This will be considered on a case by case basis, by the relevant Volunteer Coordinator / Team Leader and the Senior Administrator. Please refer to the ***Display Screen Equipment / Visual Display Units Policy*** for more information.

### Copyright and Intellectual Property

Volunteers who produce materials which fall within the category of being 'intellectual property' (i.e. the design of a leaflet or logo), by acknowledging this policy agree to grant copyright of any materials to Southampton Voluntary Services. Volunteers will not acquire publication rights or copyrights in connection with their activities involving research into the collection. Volunteers should not make public statements in the name of Southampton Voluntary Services, or its projects without first seeking permission from the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker.

Any copyright and all other rights of a like nature conferred under the laws of England and Wales in materials created by the volunteer in the course of performing their volunteer activities, or exclusively for the purpose of performing volunteer activities, shall vest in the organisation upon creation. Volunteers waive all rights granted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or as subsequently updated or amended. Where, in connection with the nature of the activity, the volunteer uses any materials in which the copyright is owned by the volunteer, the volunteer shall grant to the organisation a perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to use, maintain and support such materials.

### Volunteer Drivers

For volunteering opportunities which include driving as part of a volunteer's role, volunteers will be required to familiarise themselves with the organisation's ***Transport Policy*** and driving to work guidelines, completing a driver safety checklist with the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker. Volunteers using their own motor vehicles in connection with their volunteering for SVS must advise their insurance company that they are using the vehicle for such purposes.

Should any additional premium be requested by the insurer, the volunteer should discuss this with the Volunteer Development Worker or relevant Team Leader and, subject to the resources available, this additional charge would be deemed as a fair and redeemable out of pocket expense. Vehicles must be in a roadworthy condition with a current MOT certificate and road tax. Sight of insurance documents, MOT certificate and driving licence will be required.

## Insurance

SVS ensure that our volunteers are protected whilst performing activities on behalf of the organisation by having in place the relevant Public liability and Employers' liability insurance. Up to date copies of our policy are on display within the reception area of the Voluntary Action Centre.

## Confidentiality

SVS has access to sensitive information and data relating to many groups and individuals in the city and it is therefore imperative that the strictest confidentiality is maintained at all times. During the induction period, the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker will go through the **Confidentiality, Data Protection & Freedom of Information Policy** to ensure volunteers understand and agree to the requirements of the policy.

## Data Protection

All information about those volunteering within the organisation will be held within the requirements of the **Data Protection Act 1998** and no information related to our volunteers or their personal circumstances will be discussed outside SVS, unless we have a duty of care to make a disclosure.

## Health & Safety

SVS is committed to the health and safety of volunteers involved in all activities within the organisation. It is therefore SVS policy to do all that is reasonable to prevent personal injury and damage to property and to protect everyone from foreseeable hazards while volunteering with the organisation. SVS requires all volunteers to be aware of the **Health and Safety Policy** and to be familiar with its content. During the induction period, the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker will go through the policy to ensure volunteer understand and comply with the requirements of the policy.

## Equal Opportunities

SVS requires that all volunteers should be aware and comply with the requirements of the **Equal Opportunities Policy**, which will be provided to volunteers by the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker during the induction period.

## Violence & Harassment

SVS recognises that its staff, management committee, volunteers and service users may be victims of or perpetrators of violence and harassment, and that it has a duty to eradicate all forms of harassment and to take action where it is identified. During the induction period, the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer

Development Worker will go through the ***Violence and Harassment Policy*** to ensure the volunteer understands and complies with the requirements of the policy.

### **Smoking / Alcohol / Non-Prescription Drugs**

SVS operates a policy of no smoking within the Voluntary Action Centre or within its immediate environment. This policy also applies to volunteers when attending as a representative of the organisation at any public event. Smoking is not permitted in front of clients or the public at any time whilst engaged in voluntary activity. There is to be no consumption of alcohol or non-prescription drugs whilst volunteering and volunteers may not be under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription substances during their volunteering time. If volunteers are found to have violated this policy it will be deemed as gross misconduct and lead to the volunteering relationship being ended. Further details can be found within the ***Office Protocol***, a copy of which will be made available to the volunteer upon request to the relevant Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader or Volunteer Development Worker.

### **Criminal Activity / Disreputable Behaviour**

Volunteers are required to inform SVS if they at any stage of their volunteering with the organisation receive a conviction or are subject to adverse child protection proceedings, discriminatory investigations or any other circumstances that could impinge on the credibility of the organisation.

### **Policy Format**

If you require this policy in a different format, we will endeavour to meet your needs within the resources we have available. Please contact:

Southampton Voluntary Services,  
Voluntary Action Centre,  
Kingsland Square,  
St Marys Street,  
Southampton,  
SO14 1NW.

Telephone: (02380) 228291.

