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Volunteer Policy

Introduction

This volunteer policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement at Earth Trust. It is of relevance to everyone within the organisation, including volunteers, staff and trustees.

Our commitment

Earth Trust values the contribution made by volunteers and recognises them as an integral part of our charity. We have a responsibility to arrange our volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the support we receive from volunteers is best utilised to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Volunteers' contribution supports our mission and strategic aims and complements the role of paid staff team.

Statement of values, principles and charter

No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, an organisation cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers. Earth Trust expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.

Although volunteers offer their time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what Earth Trust expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of Earth Trust.

Our charter outlines our commitment to providing enriching experiences that benefit volunteers and contribute to our shared vision - a society where accessible, engaging green spaces enable nature and people to thrive in balance.

Volunteer co-ordination

The Volunteering Manager holds overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within Earth Trust. All volunteers will be nominated a Staff Lead to offer guidance and advice and role specific training to support the volunteer in carrying out tasks effectively and safely. Nominated staff will hold the responsibility of general management of their volunteers. The Volunteering Manager will be a secondary point of contact and deliver the core volunteer programme.

Recruitment and selection

Earth Trust is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups including children. (Some roles will need previous skills or experience while others will involve role specific training and guidance from the Staff Lead.)

Where information about a volunteer is not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned, it will be disregarded in terms of recruitment and selection.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that make them accessible to all members of nearby communities.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will be offered alternative voluntary involvement with Earth Trust wherever possible.

Induction and ongoing supervision

Volunteers will have a clear and concise role or project profile. New volunteers will be properly inducted into the charity. Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform tasks safely and with confidence.

Volunteers will be made aware of, and have access to, all the organisation's relevant policies including those relating to volunteering, health and safety, and safeguarding.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. Volunteers will have a named member of staff (Staff Lead) to whom they can take their volunteering concerns and seek guidance and support. The Volunteering Manager will act as the secondary contact.

Earth Trust recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing training for volunteers to complete tasks effectively.

Young volunteers

Young people between the ages of 13-18 can join the Young Persons' Volunteering Programme. Volunteers up to the age of 16 undertake self-led activities, in accordance with specific role profiles, and are monitored by their parent/guardian, with oversight of a Staff Lead. Over 16s can join staff led work parties. All young volunteers must have parental consent prior to volunteering.

Handbook

A Volunteer Handbook and Safety Guide are issued at the point of registration. It includes information on a range of topics around Earth Trust's expectations and what volunteers can expect from Earth Trust. The handbook is updated on an annual basis and made available to all existing volunteers.

Health and safety

Volunteers will receive the Volunteer Handbook & Safety Guide prior to volunteering which they must confirm they have read. Earth Trust will provide any health and safety equipment, and any PPE required for a volunteer to safely carry out activities.

Earth Trust recognises that it is duty bound to ensure the welfare of volunteers whilst they are volunteering for the organisation. Any accidents or near misses must be reported by volunteers to their Staff Lead at the earliest opportunity. It is the responsibility of the Staff Lead to ensure this is recorded appropriately in line with the charity's health and safety protocol.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of everyone in our community. All volunteers must familiarise themselves with the safeguarding policies, how to report concerns and the whistleblowing process.

Insurance

The organisation's Public Liability Insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. Earth Trust does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

Expenses

Volunteers are able to claim for reasonable out of pocket expenses with prior approval from their Staff Lead. Travel expenses are generally not paid unless out of the ordinary and must be approved prior to travel. Receipts must be provided and a Volunteer Expenses Claim Form must be completed. All claims should be made as soon as possible and a maximum of three calendar months after the expense has been incurred.

Confidentiality

The privacy policy is available on the Earth Trust website and outlines how personal information is held by the organisation relating to volunteers. Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as staff and will be expected to sign a Data User Agreement if applicable.

Settling differences

Earth Trust aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently where volunteers' views are heard and noted, and any grievances are acted upon promptly.

The Volunteering Manager is responsible for handling volunteer complaints or misconduct issues. Support will be provided by the charity to the volunteer while it endeavours to resolve the problem in an informal manner. The aim is for a positive and amicable outcome based on Earth Trust's guidelines for settling differences. If an informal resolution proves impossible, Earth Trust's formal Grievance Policy will be used as guidance in reaching a resolution. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role or to leave the organisation.

Feedback about the experience

We actively listen to, and act on, feedback from volunteers about their experiences and expectations. On a day-to-day basis this is primarily through feedback given to staff leads and session leaders, or directly to the Volunteering Manager via email or in-person.

Earth Trust has an annual survey which captures feedback from all volunteers. If it is possible to establish a reason for anyone's non-continuation of volunteering, this is recorded for the purposes of improving the volunteer experience.

Recognition and thanks

Regular social events will be held throughout the year to give formal thanks for the contribution made by Earth Trust volunteers. Recognition will be expressed in the charity's annual reports, on social media, plus through the Supporters' Celebration, Volunteer Social and Volunteers' Week events.