



Country Trust

Where children learn and grow

VOLUNTEER POLICY

VOLThe Country Trust is a registered charity no. 1122103 and is a company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 6436266
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President: The Duke Of Westminster KG CB CVO OBE TD CD DL

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VOLUNTEER POLICY

The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity dedicated to bringing food, farming and the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it. The Country Trust operates throughout England and Wales, working mainly with primary schools in urban areas of high deprivation. Each year The Country Trust ignites the curiosity and broadens the horizons of more than 25,000 children.

Volunteers play an important role in the operation of The Country Trust giving help and support in several different ways including hosting farm visits, supporting farm visits, Food Discovery and residential activities and undertaking other tasks such as fundraising, administration, helping at agricultural shows and events where The Country Trust has a stand.

The support of farmer hosts is crucial to the operation of The Country Trust, and is something that makes The Country Trust unique. The support from other volunteers in the field results in a greater number of children having the opportunity to experience the working countryside, cooking and growing. Volunteers who bring business and administration skills make a vital contribution to the running of the organisation.

The Country Trust is committed to involving volunteers directly within the organisation to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Form the board of management
- Make sure The Country Trust is responsive to the needs of users
- Provide different skills and perspectives
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which volunteers are involved. The Country Trust's Volunteer Handbook includes further details about the support and procedures in place for volunteers.

1. Principles

The Country Trust:

- Recognises that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to paid staff.
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to The Country Trust's work.
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- Recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- Will endeavour to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers.
- Recognises that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts.
- Will endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure that volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible.

2. Recruitment

The Country Trust seeks to recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds, skills and abilities. As such it is committed to a recruitment and selection process which is systematic, efficient, effective and equal and will be in line with The Country Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy.

Before recruiting The Country Trust will consider and take advice on how to attract people from a diverse range of backgrounds to the organisation.

People interested in becoming volunteers with The Country Trust will be given a role description containing specific information on the volunteer role in which they are interested. People interested in the role will be asked to complete a simple application form appropriate to the role that they are applying for and to supply two references.

Applicants will be invited for an informal interview with the appropriate contact person and if this is successful their references will be taken up.

Each person who volunteers for The Country Trust and works with school groups may be required to have a DBS disclosure before they can begin volunteering. The DBS disclosure will be applied for through The Country Trust if it is required for the role.

Where applicants are not selected for the role applied for, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles within The Country Trust or will be signposted to other volunteer-involving organisations or volunteer centres.

3. Induction and Training

The Country Trust will ensure that all volunteers are given an induction and training appropriate to the specific roles to be undertaken. The induction will be delivered by the volunteer's supervisor or other appropriate person. This will include:

- A role description and volunteer agreement containing full information about the volunteer role, their responsibilities, the Country Trust's expectations and support offered by the organisation. This is not a contract.
- A list of all staff members and relevant volunteers.
- List of emergency phone numbers.
- A Volunteer Handbook.
- Essential procedures e.g. timekeeping, claiming travel expenses etc.
- Each volunteer will receive copies of the relevant policies including the volunteer policy, health and safety policy, equal opportunities policy and confidentiality policy.
- Volunteers will receive a briefing and guidance on child safeguarding and a DBS disclosure will be applied for through The Country Trust if required.
- Each volunteer will receive basic training relevant to their role before they begin, including Health and Safety procedures, risk assessments and how to report an incident.
- The volunteer's supervisor (or appropriate person) will discuss any other training needs with the volunteer in supervision meetings.
- A trial period of a length appropriate to the volunteer's role will be agreed to ensure both The Country Trust and the volunteer are suited to each other. At this point there will be a review which will be an opportunity for either party to voice any concerns and, if necessary, decide if an alternative role within the organisation would be more suitable.

- Other information as appropriate.

4. Support

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person who will provide regular support.

Volunteers will have support sessions on a one-to-one basis, appropriate to the length of their volunteer placement. The sessions will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed.

Volunteers will receive newsletters and other communications to make them feel part of a larger, dynamic organisation.

If possible, volunteers will be given opportunities to meet with other staff and volunteers.

5. Confidentiality

Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the application form, references, placement details, emergency contact details, correspondence and any other relevant information in accordance with The Country Trust's Confidentiality Policy. Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff (see Confidentiality Policy).

6. Expenses

The Country Trust values its volunteers and wants to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. The Country Trust will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim all out-of-pocket expenses, including expenses for travel. All claim forms must be completed and submitted for payment by the 8th of the month (or the last working day before if this date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or bank holiday). Expense claims will be in respect of the whole of the previous month, forms must be completed in full, signed and an original receipt provided for each expense claimed. Detailed original receipts, invoices or credit/debit card slips must be submitted for all expenses claimed on the form. Cardholder copies of credit/debit card slips alone are not acceptable.

The Country Trust currently pays 45p per mile which is in line with the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) approved mileage allowance payment.

All claims must be dated no later than the last day of the month the claim relates to, e.g.

If the claim month is 1 - 31st May 2015, the date of signature should be 31st May 2015. Once authorised the claim form will be processed for payment by the middle of the month and will be paid directly to the volunteer's bank or building society account.

7. Insurance

All volunteers are covered by The Country Trust's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in agreed voluntary activities on behalf of The Country Trust.

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to inform their motor insurance company that they are using their car in the act of volunteering if this is relevant to their role.

8. Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The Country Trust is committed to equal opportunities and diversity. This commitment extends to volunteers; everyone from the community is welcomed as a volunteer. There will be no discrimination against volunteers on the grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religious beliefs, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, working pattern, responsibility for dependants, trade union membership or activity.

Furthermore, difference is valued, including the value that the different backgrounds, skills, outlooks and experiences of volunteers bring to The Country Trust .

Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding and commitment to The Country Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy (see Equal Opportunities Policy).

9. Health and Safety

The Country Trust will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare while at work in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy. Volunteers also have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to safeguard the health and safety of children and adults taking part in The Country Trust farm visits and activities.

- Each volunteer will undertake basic health and safety training.
- Volunteers will be aware of general health and safety and personal safety.
- Volunteers will know how to report an accident or incident which occurs during the course of a Country Trust activity.

(See full Health and Safety Policy)

10. Resolving Problems

The Country Trust has procedures in place to help deal with any problems that volunteers may have. In line with these procedures volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their supervisor at any time. The Country Trust will try to solve any problems at the earliest possible stage.

If the activity of a volunteer does not meet with The Country Trust's standards, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Initially there will be a meeting with the supervisor who will explain the concerns.
2. If this does not resolve the concern then a meeting with the Assistant Director or Chief Executive will be convened.
3. If the volunteer's work still does not meet with The Country Trust's standards then volunteering with The Country Trust would be brought to an end.

The volunteer will at all times be able to state freely their case and have a friend as accompaniment.

If a volunteer is dissatisfied with any aspect of their work they should:

1. Initially explain their dissatisfaction to the supervisor.
2. If that does not resolve the concern then a meeting with the supervisor should be convened.
3. If that does not resolve the issue then a formal meeting with the Assistant Director or Chief Executive should follow.
4. If after this, the volunteer's dissatisfaction remains unresolved, and The Country Trust is unable to resolve the grievance, then it would be inappropriate for the complainant to continue to be a volunteer for The Country Trust.

The volunteer will at all times be able to state freely their case and have a friend as accompaniment.

11. Endings

When volunteers move on from their role at The Country Trust they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully with their supervisor.

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other opportunities where this is possible.

POLICY DATE

This policy was agreed and disseminated on 20th August 2015 and will be reviewed annually or when there are substantial organisational changes.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees of The Country Trust

T Fanshawe
Chair of the Trustees

Date policy approved	
Date of revision and reason	
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