

SPIREVIEW HOUSING ASSOCIATION/ROYSTONHILL COMMUNITY HUB VOLUNTEER POLICY

General

1. Spire View Housing Association (SVHA) recognise that volunteers can make a vital contribution to the work of the organisation and we intend to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement in our work but in doing so we recognise that the roles of volunteers must complement and add value to the work of paid staff.

Commitment to Volunteering

2. The time, energy and skills offered by volunteers can benefit our work and help us to achieve our aims more effectively. Experience has shown that volunteering also brings benefits to volunteers themselves and to those with whom they work. We believe that our relationship with our volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which SVHA and our volunteers both have rights and responsibilities. We hope that volunteers will enjoy their involvement and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives.

Values and Principles behind Volunteering

3. SVHA's values and principles for volunteering:

- recognises volunteering as a means of fulfilling its charitable and strategic objectives;
- recognises that it is a way of getting people and local communities committed to SVHA;
- appreciates that volunteering is an inclusive act of participation that is itself important in developing awareness, commitment, understanding of and promoting work of SVHA;
- recognises that successful volunteer involvement takes account of individual's motivations, aspirations and needs;
- acknowledges volunteering as a wider benefit to society and a key part of active citizenship;
- recruits volunteers on a task-led basis to match SVHA's needs with volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience and motivation;
- respect volunteers' views by both listening to and learning from what they have to say;
- distinguishes volunteering from employment and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect by complementing the work of paid staff.

Defining Volunteers and the Relationship with SVHA

4. A volunteer is someone who, without expectation of financial compensation beyond reimbursement of genuine out-of-pocket expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of SVHA. The importance of maintaining a balanced, effective and mutually beneficial staff volunteer partnership is essential. It is based on the principle that SVHA provides the framework, organisation, direction and day-to-day management together with appropriate levels of accountability, while volunteers add value by performing a wide range of supportive roles, contributing time, flexibility and specialist and manual skills. Within this framework, volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity which is supported and encouraged by SVHA but is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment.

5. The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. 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 provided. Likewise, SVHA cannot be compelled to provide regular work, or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken.

Recruitment and Selection

6. SVHA is committed to equal opportunities and believe that volunteering should be open to all regardless of an individual's marital status, sex, race, colour, sexual orientation, religion, politics, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age or disability and will do everything reasonably practical to make volunteering valuable to everybody and to conform with all relevant legislation. We will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which no volunteer feels under threat or intimidated because of their religious beliefs or political opinion.

7. To ensure that volunteering opportunities are widely accessible we will promote opportunities and ensure that all volunteers will have a clear, concise and current role description. The underlying principle is the identification of real need for a task to be undertaken.

8. In selecting volunteers who are to work with children, young people and other vulnerable groups SVHA's Child Protection Policy will be followed. We will request references from volunteers where this is seen to be appropriate, and these will be treated in confidence.

9. People who offer to volunteer will have their offers dealt with as promptly and professionally as possible. Ten working days will be the normal maximum length of time in which we will respond to a volunteer enquiry. We will regularly review the way in which potential volunteers can make contact with us. Once placed, we will expect volunteers to comply with existing SVHA policies and procedures.

Support and Recognition for Volunteers

10. We will invest financial and people resources in the management of volunteers with a mentor appointed to manage these issues with their main objectives:

- to encourage and enable people to become and remain volunteers with SVHA;
- to maximise the involvement of volunteers and the impact of volunteers on the work of SVHA;
- to improve the organisation and infrastructure of volunteering in SVHA;
- to communicate the importance, effectiveness and value of volunteering throughout SVHA and externally.

11. We will provide an induction to the organisation and a review session for volunteers to assess to progress and resolve any problems at an early stage. We will also reimburse volunteers' travel expenses and provide clear information to volunteers about how to make a claim.

12. SVHA will provide appropriate insurance cover for its volunteers with regard to both personal accident cover and public liability cover. Volunteers will be given information on other legislation or policies, which may affect them, i.e. Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities. In respect of these pieces of legislation volunteers will be treated in the same way as paid staff for liability purposes.

13. Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's problems solving procedures, and who to contact if they have a grievance about any aspect of their work. Furthermore, staff responsible for volunteers will be encouraged to ensure appropriate feedback and acknowledgement on a regular basis.

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

14. SVHA recognises the right of volunteers to:

- have a good understanding of what we do;
- know who they are answerable to;
- be part of the team;
- know who to talk to if there are problems or difficulties;
- be properly valued and thanked;
- receive regular and constructive feedback;
- have safe working conditions and adequate insurance cover; and
- say no to unreasonable requests.

15. We expect that volunteers will:

- extend to their fellow volunteers and staff the same degree of courtesy that they would expect to receive;
- adhere to the SVHA's policies, procedures and standards, including health and safety, child protection and equal opportunities procedures, etc;
- be reliable;
- tell us if they are not available or running late;
- respect confidentiality;
- carry out the agreed work;
- give us constructive feedback if appropriate;
- ask for support if they need it;
- be accountable and accept constructive comments.

Management and Communications

16. SVHA acknowledges the need for a clear and consistent organisational framework for voluntary involvement that creates a positive climate for development. Each volunteer will have a designated mentor to guide and advise them in their tasks. Volunteers will be advised of who to approach for support and have regular access to that person.

17. Play Scotland will ensure that paid staff at all levels are clear about the role of our volunteers and that good working relationships are fostered with volunteers. The roles allocated to volunteers in SVHA will allow the organisation to increase its work capabilities and will compliment and add value to the work carried out by paid staff. Volunteers will not be engaged in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular work but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.

18. SVHA will keep records of people's volunteering involvement, including information on training undertaken and references for monitoring and providing statistical information. Volunteers will have access to their records and all data will be kept in line with the Data Protection Act and any other relevant legislation.