



# VOLUNTEER POLICY

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## 1. Policy statement

Volunteers are an integral part of St Nicks activity, and St Nicks would not be able to achieve all that the charity does without them. St Nicks is committed to its volunteer programme and its individual volunteers, ensuring consistency and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly. This policy allows volunteers to know where they stand, how they can expect to be treated and where they can turn to if they feel things are going wrong. It also helps ensure that staff and trustees fully understand the expectations on volunteers and what role they have within the organisation. St Nicks has a duty of care under Health and Safety law to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and members of the public who may be affected by St Nicks' activities.

## 2. Recruitment

- 2.1** St Nicks will not create volunteer roles to replace or substitute paid roles. As such, volunteer roles will:
  - a.** never have tasks assigned to them that require accreditation to a governing body
  - b.** have roles with distinct differences in tasks and responsibilities to paid roles' job descriptions.
- 2.2** St Nicks is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion, and while volunteering is not employment or the use of goods or services for the purpose of the Equality Act 2010, St Nicks will recruit volunteers from all sections of the community in line with St Nicks' **Equal Opportunities Policy** (please see **HR Policy**). St Nicks will seek to make reasonable adjustments where possible to remove any potential barriers to volunteers.
- 2.3** Depending on the requirements of the voluntary role, the recruitment process may involve relevant steps from the following:
  - a.** a sign-up sheet
  - b.** an application form
  - c.** an informal chat
  - d.** a formal interview
  - e.** two references, with at least one from a previous employer where possible
  - f.** DBS check, for roles that undertake a regulated activity, sustained or unsupervised contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults, in line with St Nicks' **Safeguarding Policy**
    - i.** in line with best practice regarding the recruitment of ex-offenders, St Nicks will state in advance when a DBS check is necessary in all role descriptions. Having a prior offence will not automatically prohibit people from volunteering: decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.
  - g.** Wherever possible St Nicks will endeavour to keep bureaucracy to a minimum while ensuring that all the necessary processes and checks are maintained.

- 2.4 If a volunteer applicant is not appropriate for a role and reasonable adjustments cannot be made, other roles may be suggested to them, or they may be referred to their local volunteer centre.

### 3. Induction and training

- 3.1 All volunteers will receive training on St Nicks and its policies as relevant to their role. This may include but is not limited to:
- a. an introduction to St Nicks and their voluntary role
  - b. Health and safety
  - c. Safeguarding
  - d. Lone working
  - e. Confidentiality and data protection
- 3.2 All volunteers will be asked to read and sign the Volunteer Health and Safety Guidelines and Code of Conduct which requires them to abide by the rules and principles of St Nicks. These will be clearly explained and copies of relevant policies and procedures will be made available.
- 3.3 All volunteers will be briefed about the importance of maintaining confidentiality and good conduct while out on the nature reserve or dealing with the public
- 3.4 Role-specific and task-specific training will be given to volunteers as required.
- 3.5 Volunteers will be given clear instruction on the tasks they are to be given.
- 3.6 Volunteers will be reminded to only perform tasks for which they have received training, that they are confident performing safely, and which are within their role description. This is to comply with St Nicks' **Health and Safety Policy** and the stipulations of St Nicks' **Insurance** (see item 4).

### 4. Insurance

- 4.1 Volunteers at St Nicks are covered by St Nicks' insurance through Illingworths:
- a. while performing agreed tasks as outlined by the supervising member of staff during volunteering sessions
  - b. and that they have received training for
  - c. and while complying with St Nicks' **Health and Safety Policy** and risk assessments for their activity.

### 5. Support and supervision

- 5.1 All St Nicks voluntary activities will be supervised by a member of St Nicks staff or by an approved intern (such as Park Rangers).
- 5.2 All volunteers must provide a named emergency contact person and phone number.
- 5.3 Volunteers will receive a task-specific health and safety briefing at the start of each new task, as well as refresher briefings as needed.
- 5.4 All intern roles (such as Park Ranger) will be appointed a supervisor, and provided with regular appraisal sessions to get feedback on their progress, discuss future development and to ask any questions.

### 6. Expectations

- 6.1 Volunteers at St Nicks can expect:
- a. to make a tangible positive impact towards the charity's work
  - b. to feel valued for the contributions they make towards St Nicks and other green spaces in York
  - c. to be treated politely and fairly, regardless of their actual (or perceived) age, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity leave, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (or association with any of these protected characteristics) as per St Nicks' **Equal Opportunities Policy** (please see **HR Policy**)
  - d. to receive adequate training for their role (see item 3)
  - e. to receive relevant updates and information

- f. to know who they can go to with questions or concerns (see item 5)
- g. to be safe whilst volunteering, with adequate safeguards and risk assessments in place
- h. to be adequately insured whilst volunteering (see item 4)
- i. their personal information to be held securely and used only as outlined in St Nicks' **GDPR Policy** and **Privacy Notice**
- j. to not face any detriment or disadvantage for whistleblowing (in line with item 12)
- k. a regular meeting with their supervisor, depending on their role/nature of their volunteering activity/frequency of volunteering
- l. reasonable expenses, depending on their role (see item 13)
- m. a supportive and positive team and working environment

**6.2** St Nicks expects all volunteers to:

- a. operate within the boundaries of their role description, their training, and any agreements they have made with St Nicks
- b. be honest
- c. act professionally when on the Local Nature Reserve or other site where St Nicks is working
- d. protect St Nicks' reputation and ensuring a separation between their volunteering any personal views that do not reflect St Nicks' policies or ethos
- e. respect confidentiality in line with St Nicks' **GDPR Policy** if handling data as part of their role
- f. treat others politely and fairly, regardless of their actual (or perceived) age, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity leave, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (or association with any of these protected characteristics) as per St Nicks' **Equal Opportunities Policy** (please see **HR Policy**)
- g. give as much warning as possible if they are not able to attend any pre-arranged volunteering session
- h. inform St Nicks of any health and safety, data protection, or safeguarding concerns that they may have
- i. wear appropriate clothing and footwear when attending volunteering activities
- j. only smoke in the designated smoking area
- k. not take or be under the influence of alcohol, or of recreational or illegal drugs while volunteering
- l. only use St Nicks resources in line with guidance in item 8
- m. update St Nicks on any changes to their contact or emergency contact information
- n. adhere to lone working procedures, if relevant to their role (see item 9)

## **7. Boundaries**

- 7.1** Volunteers will not be required to contact service-users and activity participants directly: all communication relating to St Nicks services and activities will be done by members of staff via official charity channels. This is to protect volunteers from being contactable by service users outside of their volunteering.
- 7.2** If volunteers receive attempts to communicate/social media requests from a participant or service-user on their personal equipment/social media accounts etc., they should report this to their supervisor who can raise this section of the policy with the service-user or participant through official channels.
- 7.3** Volunteers should only perform tasks that are part of their role description (see **6.2.a**). If a service-user or participant requests services or support beyond this, volunteers should make a note of the request and inform the participant/service-user that they will inform their supervisor, who will follow up the request to discuss the service-user's needs through an official channel.

## 8. Use of charity resources

- 8.1 St Nicks' resources have been purchased in order to fulfil its charitable Aims: as such, volunteers should only use St Nicks resources and equipment, if provided for their role, for charity purposes only and for the fulfilment of tasks in their role description.

## 9. Lone volunteering

- 9.1 Volunteer lone working is always discouraged, and alternatives will be found wherever possible. Volunteers are advised not to work alone on the reserve or other site used by St Nicks outside of agreed volunteering sessions or activities: St Nicks cannot accept responsibility for any volunteer choosing to do so.
- 9.2 Interns (such as Park Rangers) who are working alone on the nature reserve must inform a member of staff of their approximate working location and how long they intend to be there: they must carry their mobile phone and agree a meeting point and time at the end of their planned activity.

## 10. Safeguarding

- 10.1 Volunteers who come into contact with children through their role must be aware of St Nicks' **Safeguarding Policy and procedures**. They will be informed of this via training (item 3). This will include training on St Nicks' procedure for raising any identified safeguarding concerns in line with the **Safeguarding Policy**.

## 11. Grievance management

- 11.1 St Nicks aims for expectations to be met at all times. In instances where anyone feels these expectations have not been met, the following procedure will be followed:
- Volunteers who feel that St Nicks has not met its expectations should speak with their supervisor, or the member of staff supervising their session in the first instance, or another member of staff if they feel that is more appropriate.
  - St Nicks will aim to acknowledge the volunteer's concerns within the same working week where possible, and may arrange a meeting to discuss the concern further in order to resolve the matter.
  - If a volunteer feels that their concern is not resolved, they may address a complaint to the Charity Support Manager ([eliza@stnicks.org.uk](mailto:eliza@stnicks.org.uk)). They may arrange a meeting to discuss the concern or investigate the matter further, and they will provide a response to the complaint within two weeks if possible. The volunteer complainant will be kept informed if there is to be a delay.
  - If the volunteer is unsatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may be encouraged to end their volunteering relationship with St Nicks.
- 11.2 If St Nicks feels that a volunteer has not met expectations, the following process will be followed:
- In most cases the supervising member of staff will have an informal conversation with them in the first instance to discuss:
    - what expectations had not been met
    - what support St Nicks could offer to help them meet expectations, if appropriate
    - an action plan to see an improvement with a set timeframe for review
  - If the above informal process cannot identify a solution, does not solve the concern within the agreed timeframe, or in significant cases where St Nicks does not wish to risk an expectation not being met again, the supervising member of staff may help the volunteer to explore other volunteering options through St Nicks, St Nicks may terminate the volunteering relationship.
    - If the volunteering relationship is to be terminated, the volunteer will be informed of this decision face-to-face wherever possible.

## 12. Whistleblowing

- 12.1 Any volunteer who wishes to raise a genuine concern in the public interest should raise the matter with their supervising member of staff. The **Whistleblowing Policy** (see **HR Policy**) and procedure will be followed.
- 12.2 Anyone following the **Whistleblowing Policy** will not face any detriment or disadvantage for raising their concern.
- 12.3 Any member of staff who perpetrates detrimental treatment to an individual making a protected disclosure will be subject to disciplinary action.

## 13. Expenses

- 13.1 Intern roles (such as Park Rangers) can claim transport costs to and from the place of volunteering and in the course of fulfilling their volunteer role.
- 13.2 Volunteers should claim expenses within a month of incurring the costs to support the charity's finance management.

## 14. Termination

- 14.1 St Nicks recognises that volunteers can withdraw at any time without prejudice and will be thanked for their contributions.
- 14.2 St Nicks reserves the right to terminate the volunteer relationship without notice at any time in the case of severe or persistent breaches of volunteer expectations (see item 6.2).
- 14.3 St Nicks invites volunteers to provide feedback on their volunteering experience on leaving St Nicks: this may be collected via a leaving questionnaire or an exit interview.
- 14.4 St Nicks will supply a reference for any intern roles (such as Park Rangers) seeking other voluntary work or paid employment.
- 14.5 St Nicks will supply a brief reference detailing the length of the volunteer's involvement and activities completed for any volunteer seeking other voluntary work or paid employment if the following criteria are met:
  - a. The volunteer must be a current regular volunteer or have attended regular volunteering sessions within the past year.
  - b. The volunteer must ask permission from their supervising member of staff to list them as a referee, and must use that member of staff's contact details (i.e. St Nicks will not respond to reference requests sent to [info@stnicks.org.uk](mailto:info@stnicks.org.uk) or that are not addressed to a specific member of staff).

# ST NICKS CODE OF CONDUCT

This is a code of conduct about our communication, behaviour and actions that that we as staff and volunteers of St Nicks agree to abide by.

We agree to:

- Be respectful towards each other and be aware of our use of language to ensure we do not cause offence
- Follow St Nicks rules and procedures, including health and safety guidelines, and the Sustainability, Equal Opportunity, Safeguarding, and GDPR policies as relevant to our role(s)
- Listen to and follow the instructions of our designated supervisor
- Arrive on time to engage fully in any required safety briefings and so that tasks can be started promptly
- As volunteers give as much notice as possible if we are unable to work when expected, and as staff to give notice of any change to arrangements in good time
- Act as a good ambassador for St Nicks, and to be friendly and approachable to members of the public, other volunteers, placement workers and staff
- Only smoke in the designated places and not whilst carrying out work on the reserve or other green corridor site
- Not to drop any litter (including cigarette butts) on the reserve or other green corridor site
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs
- To notify the designated supervisor (in confidence) of any medical condition or medication that could affect our ability to work
- As volunteers, only carry out tasks that we feel comfortable with, or as staff, our contracted duties
- Address any issues or worries with the appropriate person, in line with guidance in the volunteer policy
- Have fun!

## **Health and Safety Guidelines for Working at St Nicks**

Please read and follow carefully. Confirm that you have read these guidelines by signing the sheet within the folder. Thank you!

Beware of the hazards most commonly found on site:

\* dog faeces \*                      \* litter \*                      \*broken wood \*

1. **FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:** Volunteers must only carry out tasks for which they have been trained and are comfortable doing. Please follow all instructions given by the supervisor, particularly for use of tools and equipment, and ask questions if you are unsure of how to use them.
2. **INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS:** All injuries, skin abrasions or cuts, however large or small, must be reported to a supervisor. Your supervisor will have a first aid kit to hand, and there is a first aid kit in the Environment Centre.
3. **WEAR OUTDOOR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING:** Volunteers will be working outdoors in any kind of weather, so make sure you are suitably dressed. Often you will work in areas where there are nettles and bramble so make sure you are protected by covering your legs/arms.
4. **HAZARDOUS ITEMS:** If you find needles, syringes or other hazardous items, please do not touch them. Inform a member of staff or your supervisor immediately so that they can remove it safely. Litter pickers can be used to remove broken glass or other sharp objects.
5. **GLOVES AND HANDLING:** Always use gloves when working. Handle full plastic bags with care as they may contain hazardous content.
6. **HEAVY ITEMS AND TOOLS:** Do not lift anything heavy by yourself, always ask for other volunteers or a member of staff for help. Ensure that you lift with your legs and not by bending your back. Do not over-exert yourself when using any of the tools. If you get tired or feel any pain or discomfort, take a break or swap to a different activity.
7. **CYCLISTS:** There is a cycle path that runs through the nature reserve and others around green corridors sites. Please be aware of this when working alongside paths: be vigilant, keep paths clear and warn other volunteers if you see a cyclist approaching.
8. **AFTER WORK:** Please wash your hands after any outdoor work. There are sinks in each of the toilets at the Environment Centre, and there is a larger sink in the hall. Please do not use the kitchen sink for hand washing.

**THANKS FOR HELPING TO KEEP YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE!**