



Volunteer Induction Booklet



Hello and welcome to St Nicks. We hope you enjoy your time here as a volunteer.

You join a tradition of community involvement here at St Nicks, where volunteers have worked together to transform a former landfill site into the nature reserve it is today. From there, we have spread our reach beyond our nature reserve to greenspaces across the city, creating a network of connected habitat, or Green Corridors, through York. All of this work has been done with the help of volunteers like you. Volunteers continue to be the heart of St Nicks, making a tangible difference to the local environment and future of our city.

We at St Nicks want to make sure that your time here is a safe, enjoyable and rewarding experience that meets your expectations.

So, thank you for giving your time to our cause and we look forward to getting to know you.

From the Green Corridors York Team
St Nicks

About St Nicks

St Nicks is an officially designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is home to St Nicks Environment Centre.

Both the LNR and the Centre are managed by the Friends of St Nicholas Fields (working name St Nicks), established as a charity in 1998. St Nicks is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered charity number 1153739.

The Environment Centre showcases eco-design principles and was built as a base for volunteers working on the nature reserve, sustainable education projects and our kerbside recycling scheme. In addition to these activities, we also run Nature Based Wellbeing, community events, environmental education and our Green Corridors York project.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to “create thriving and connected biodiverse communities”.
Our Mission is to “build and connect flourishing communities through urban greenspace generation, nature-based wellbeing and sustainable living”.
Our Values (how we strive to achieve our vision & mission) are fundamental to how we work each and every day:

- **Collaboration** – Our approachability and inclusiveness ensure that everyone who is affected by our work is involved in shaping it.
- **Integrity** – We are honest, inclusive and have respect for all life through our ethics, authenticity and commitment.
- **Innovation** – We are committed to constructively exploring ideas that help us get closer to our vision by doing things differently and taking pioneering approaches, recognising the learning and development that comes with this path.
- **Professionalism** – All of our actions to our beneficiaries, stakeholders and each other demonstrate our mutual respect, competence, proactivity and the way we make a difference.

Volunteer Opportunities

Practical Conservation Opportunities:

Monday 9.30am-12pm, Fulford Ings Corridor Conservation session.

Work site varies: Help to improve the greenspaces along our Fulford Ings green corridor. By improving the area through planting, sowing, scything and coppicing, we are making the habitat bigger, better and more joined up for wildlife.

Tuesday 9.30am-12pm, St Nicks LNR Practical Conservation sessions.

Meet at St Nicks Environment Centre: Help us to manage and maintain St Nicks Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and improve the habitats that we have around the varied 24 acre site for both wildlife and people.

Wednesday 9.30am-12pm, Foss Corridor Conservation session. Work

site varies: Help us improve the River Foss habitat through conservation tasks along the river. This could be scything, planting, or managing scrub at sites including York St John nature area off Huntington Road, West Nooks water meadow or Willowbank Green.

Wednesday during term time 2pm-4pm, Student Action Volunteering.

Meet at St Nicks Environment Centre: Join the team of university students who help us to manage the nature reserve and improve the site through practical conservation tasks.

Thursday 9.30am-12pm, Becks Corridor Conservation sessions. Work site varies:

Support our Green Corridors York project and join our Becks Conservation Group as we rotate around different sites along both Tang Hall and Osbaldwick becks. We will be carrying out practical conservation tasks across these sites to improve the becks and the habitat connected to them.

Thursday 2pm-4pm, Urban Corridors Conservation session. Work site

varies: Help us to further develop our Green Corridor network through the city as we work on greenspaces in our urban areas, creating 'green stepping stones'. Help us to maintain and enhance these greenspaces through conservation tasks, developing better habitat across the city.

Friday 9.30am-12pm, Greening Up Heworth Holme. Meet at the shed near Burnholme Drive entrance:

Help us to continue to improve this remnant of wetland meadow for both the people and the wildlife that use the site. Tasks range from scything the meadow to managing bee banks and wildlife scrapes.

Weekend Volunteering

1st Sunday of the month – Becks and Foss Conservation sessions

10am-12pm, Becks Corridor Conservation session. Work site varies.

1.30-3.30pm, Foss Corridor Conservation session. Work site varies.

2nd Sunday of the month – Fulford Corridor Conservation sessions

10am-12.30pm, Fulford Ings Corridor Conservation session. Work site varies.

1.30-4pm, Fulford Community Orchard Conservation session. Meet at the orchard near the Designer Outlet.

3rd Sunday of the month – St Nicks Conservation session

10am-12pm, St Nicks Conservation session. Meet at St Nicks Environment Centre.

4th Sunday of the month – Urban Conservation sessions

10am-12pm, Urban Corridor Conservation session. Work site varies.

2-3.30pm, Urban Corridor Conservation session. Work site varies.

*Please note, our weekend volunteering sessions will not take place if **amber or red** weather warnings are issued. This is to ensure the safety of both our staff and volunteers.*

Wildlife Surveying Opportunities:

Wednesday 10am-12pm, Wildwatch. Meet at St Nicks Environment

Centre: Join our team of very knowledgeable Wildwatch volunteers as they observe and record as many different species around St Nicks as possible.

Our team can help to discover and identify different species, regularly finding new and exciting species to add to our records. You don't need any

prior experience in species identification to get involved in these sessions, just an enthusiasm for wildlife and a willingness to learn.

Ecological Surveying Volunteer, across all GCY sites (ad hoc): Help us to gather data on specific habitat or species. This data helps us to identify areas that need improvement or species that need support, create management plans, and track changes within habitats or populations over time. It is an essential part of our GCY project. We conduct surveys such as:

- Water vole and American mink
- Grassland quality
- River habitat
- Freshwater invertebrates
- Invasive, non-native species (INNS)

In addition to these specific surveys, we also do ad hoc events such as bioblitzes, nighttime safaris and wildwatches. If you would like to get involved in ecological surveying or monitoring, you can email Ecology Officer, Miranda Dunstan (miranda@stnicks.org.uk).

Important Information for Volunteers

Health and Safety: Upon their induction, we ask all new volunteers to sign to say they have read and understand our general Health and Safety Guidelines. Before each practical task, a health and safety talk is carried out relevant to the activity.

First Aid: All staff members are qualified first aiders. We will also provide First Aid training for Park Rangers. There are first aid kits located on each of the sites we work on, or first aid kits are brought along. Please inform a member of staff if you have any medical needs, injure yourself or are feeling unwell. We also record any 'near miss' incidents.

Signing up for volunteer sessions: We ask volunteers to sign up for sessions in advance where possible. This is important for several reasons. It informs us of how many people to expect at any given session and therefore we can ensure there are enough tools and resources for everyone. This is particularly important if tools are being brought from another site and there is not a store of tools in the area we are working in. It also means for health and safety reasons, we know who to expect and can conduct welfare checks if necessary. You can sign up online using this link: www.stnicks.org.uk/volunteer-sessions/individual-sessions/ For those not online, you can speak to the sessional leader directly to let them know you plan to attend.

Tools: Tools are locked up in sheds and storage areas across our sites. Please clean and return the tools once used. Please report any damaged/lost tools.

Gloves: Please pair up and return gloves if borrowing them. If wet please do not place with dry gloves, let your supervisor know they need drying/cleaning.

Smoking and vaping: We ask volunteers not to smoke or vape whilst working in a group. Please move away from the group if you do want to smoke or vape to ensure we are being respectful of those in close proximity.

St Nicks Code of Conduct

This is a code of conduct regarding communication, behaviour and actions that we expect from St Nicks staff and volunteers.

- Be respectful towards St Nicks staff, volunteers and members of the public, treating others with fairness, equality, dignity and respect.
- You must not engage in any activity that may cause physical or mental harm or distress to another person (such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, assault, bullying, or discrimination or harassment).
- Act honestly, responsibly and with integrity.
- Be aware of use of language to ensure you do not cause offence.
- Follow St Nicks' rules and procedures, including health and safety guidelines and the environmental, equal opportunities, child protection and confidentiality policies.
- Direct any questions regarding St Nicks' policies, procedures, support or supervision to your supervisor.
- Listen to and follow the instructions from the designated supervisor.
- Arrive on time so that safety talks can be given, and tasks can be started promptly, or let your supervisor know you are running late.
- Do not smoke or vape whilst conducting work with St Nicks staff and volunteers – move a respectful distance away to smoke/ vape.
- Do not drop any litter (including cigarette butts) on our sites.
- Do not be under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs while working.
- Notify the sessional supervisor (in confidence) if there is any reason your ability to work may be affected (you do not have to share specific details if you do not feel comfortable doing so).
- Only carry out work that you feel comfortable doing.
- Raise concerns about possible wrongdoing witnessed.
- Report any health and safety concerns as soon as possible.
- Address any issues or difficulties about any aspect of your role or how you are managed in line with St Nicks' volunteer policy.

Health & Safety Guidelines for Volunteering with St Nicks

Please read carefully. Thank you.

1. INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS: All injuries, skin abrasions/cuts, large or small must be reported to a supervisor and staff. There will always be a first aid kit available on site.

2. WEAR OUTDOOR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING: Volunteers work outdoors in any kind of weather so make sure you are dressed suitably. Often you will work in areas where there are nettles and bramble so make sure you are protected by covering exposed areas.

3. GLASS, NEEDLES, AND SYRINGES: If you find a needle or syringe, please do not touch it under any circumstances; inform a staff member or a supervisor immediately so they can remove it. Do not pick up any broken glass or sharp objects without wearing protective gloves, use a litter picker if necessary.

4. GLOVES AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE): Always wear gloves when carrying out practical work unless told otherwise by your supervisor. Other PPE such as hard hats or safety goggles may be required for specific tasks. Essential PPE will always be provided and must be worn when required.

5. HEAVY ITEMS AND TOOLS: Do not lift anything heavy by yourself, always ask other volunteers or members of staff for help. Ensure you lift with your legs, not back. A briefing and demonstration of how to use tools safely will be given at the beginning of a task. Do not over-exert yourself when using any of the tools, if you get tired or feel any strain, take a break or swap to a different activity.

6. CYCLISTS AND DOG WALKERS: Most of our sites are open to the public and therefore we often work along footpaths and cycle paths. Be vigilant to members of the public also using the area, keep paths clear and warn fellow volunteers if you see a cyclist, pedestrian or off lead dogs approaching. Stop working while people pass safely if necessary.

7. COMMON HAZARDS: Some common hazards across our sites include dog poo, broken glass and litter, broken wood, slippy or uneven ground. Please take care when working on our Green Corridor sites and report any safety concerns to your supervisor immediately.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP KEEPING VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF SAFE!

Volunteer Policy

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. 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:
An introduction to St Nicks and their voluntary role

- a.** Health and safety
- b.** Safeguarding

- c.** Lone working
- d.** 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 Marsh Commercial Insurance:

- 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 sites 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
- m.** Adhere to lone working procedures, if relevant to their role (see item 9)

7. Boundaries with participants and service-users

- 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[1]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.

9.3 Non-intern volunteers should not be given access codes or unsupervised access to the Environment Centre or compound.

10. Safeguarding

10.1 Volunteers who come into contact with children or adults at risk of abuse 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:

- a.** 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.
- b.** 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.
- c.** If a volunteer feels that their concern is not resolved, they may address a complaint to the Charity Support Manager (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 complaint relates to the Charity Support Manager, it should be addressed to the CEO (chiefexec@stnicks.org.uk).
- d.** 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:

- a.** In most cases the supervising member of staff will have an informal conversation with them in the first instance to

discuss:

- i. What expectations had not been met
 - ii. What support St Nicks could offer to help them meet expectations, if appropriate
 - iii. An action plan to see an improvement with a set timeframe for review
- b.** 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 or for other appropriate cause (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 or that are not addressed to a specific member of staff).

What else do you need to know?

Problem Solving Procedure

While we hope we never have to use it we feel it is good practice to have a clear procedure for dealing with problems so issues can be dealt with. This is outlined in our Volunteer Policy but please speak to your line manager if you need further information.

Complaints against St Nicks

Every effort will be made to settle any dispute or complaint amicably. In the first instance, you should take your complaint to your named contact person. If the grievance is not resolved, it may then go before the St Nicks Management Committee.

Complaints against you

The matter will be discussed amicably, and steps taken to address the issue. Steps may include additional training and supervision. If the issue is not resolved after more formal discussions, the volunteer may have to cease their volunteering with St Nicks.

St Nicks Policies

At St Nicks we take your wellbeing very seriously and as an organisation we have policies in place to show this. In the Green Corridors office you can find our volunteer, health & safety, equal opportunities, GDPR and safeguarding policies. All of these have been approved by our Board of Trustees and are reviewed regularly. These can also be emailed upon request for those who prefer an online version or who do not work on St Nicks LNR. Volunteers are covered in St Nicks health and safety policy and are covered for voluntary work under our insurance. Some of our policies are also available on our website: www.stnicks.org.uk/about-us/the-charity/policies/

Training and Support

All new volunteers will receive an induction to St Nicks. Training will be provided 'on the job' during volunteering activities. We will provide an introduction to a variety of conservation and ecological monitoring activities, depending on what you want to achieve from volunteering at St Nicks. We are also happy to provide a reference for you.

Maria Gill, Senior Green Corridors Officer is the volunteer coordinator for our Green Corridors Project. She will be your main contact regarding general volunteering. If you are joining us in a formal volunteer role such as our Volunteer Park Ranger traineeship, or for ecological monitoring, line management may fall with another member of the Green Corridors team. This will be made clear upon starting your volunteer role, so you have appropriate contact details and know who your point of contact is for your role. If you need any extra support or have specific personal needs, please let us know.

We usually have two socials a year, one over the summer and one in December to say thank you for all your hard work!

Please feel you can speak to us at any time. If you have any great ideas, feedback, problems or questions come and have a chat.

Contact Details

Maria Gill

Senior Green Corridors Officer

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