



SOUNABOUT VOLUNTEERING POLICY

This policy is for volunteers and staff of Soundabout. The purpose of this policy is to let everyone know how we will treat volunteers within our organisation and to let volunteers know what they can expect when they join us.

The policy will define what a volunteer is and how we will recruit, manage and support volunteering in our organisation. A copy of this policy will be given to every volunteer and will be stored by all those people who support or manage volunteers.

Because this policy applies to the whole of the organisation including our Trustees, everyone will be aware of its existence and purpose.

As well as this policy there are also other documents that may need to be shared with volunteers and those who involve or manage them. These documents are shared in the Volunteer Handbook and are all stored on Soundabout's Sharepoint site available to the office team that need them.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering is:

“...An important expression of citizenship and essential to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain”

The Volunteering Code of Practice

This policy is aimed at volunteers of all ages.

OUR VOLUNTEERING VALUES ARE BASED ON THE COMPACT CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR VOLUNTEERING

- **Choice**

People must be free to choose to volunteer; no one will be forced to volunteer. Volunteers are also free to choose not to volunteer.

- **Diversity**

Volunteering is open to all, regardless of background, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, faith or other factors.

- **Mutual Respect**

In return for giving their time, energy and skills, volunteers expect to gain something – this could include: a sense of worthwhile achievement; useful skills; experience and contacts; sociability and fun; inclusion in the life of Soundabout.

- **Recognition**

We want to recognise volunteers' contribution to our organisation, within the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives.

Our recruitment process

- All volunteers will complete a 'Volunteer Enquiry Form'. The Enquiry Form includes a space for volunteers to provide two suitable references.
- All Soundabout volunteers will be asked to go through a DBS check as part of the recruitment process. All administrative costs for this will be met by Soundabout.
- Having a criminal record will not be a bar to volunteering unless Soundabout thinks that a conviction means the applicant is unsuitable. If appropriate a meeting will be arranged to discuss any outcomes of the DBS check and a risk assessment taken for any individuals with a criminal record.
- All volunteers will be invited to meet the Volunteer Manager from Soundabout for a discussion on the volunteer role, its requirements and each other's expectations. This meeting is for both the Volunteer manager and volunteer to see if the volunteering opportunity is suitable.
- When the DBS and references have been carried out, potential volunteers will be told whether a volunteering placement with Soundabout can go ahead. Soundabout retains the right to refuse the offer of a voluntary role to any volunteers, for example if any background checks are not satisfactory or there is a breach of Soundabout's core values.
- Volunteers are expected to complete online safeguarding training and will also receive our safeguarding handbook.

- The Volunteer handbook will be given to all volunteers. We ask that volunteers read the policies and sign the agreement to say they have done so.

OUR INDUCTION AND TRAINING

All volunteers will receive an induction with their supervisor that will include

- A full explanation of their role and tasks and the expectations of the organisation;
- An introduction to the team (where possible) which will include staff, other volunteers and members of the organisation;
- A clear introduction to where they will be based when volunteering and who to go to if they need help or support. An introduction to the building (if appropriate), including any health and safety information relevant to the role. This should include fire safety and personal safety e.g. where to store personal items, toilets and general building layout;
- Additional training and induction for each role will be identified by the Volunteer Manager; this may include a risk assessment.

WHAT EXPENSES WILL BE PAID TO VOLUNTEERS?

Soundabout will reimburse volunteers' reasonable out of pocket expenses. These will be agreed by the supervisor and could include:

- Travel undertaken in the course of volunteering
- Postage and telephone costs if directly part of the volunteering role;

The co-ordinator will agree expenses as appropriate to the role. Full details of volunteer expenses are found in the Volunteer Handbook.

A full breakdown of agreed expenses will be given during induction e.g. mileage rate.

To claim expenses back, volunteers will need to complete a '**Volunteer Expenses Claim Form**' (found in Volunteer Handbook). Proof of the claim, such as bus tickets or receipts, should be attached to the form. The claim must be authorised by the appropriate member of staff before reimbursement is given.

WHAT IF THINGS GO WRONG IN THE VOLUNTEER ROLE?

Volunteers, although valued by Soundabout, are not employees and have no contractual obligation to the organisation. If an issue arises the coordinator will speak and listen to the volunteer, this may lead to agreements about changes in behaviour or expectations which will be monitored and reviewed.

If the supervisor or the volunteer feel that there is no resolution to any issues raised then the volunteer will be asked to leave.

If a serious incident such as theft, violence or a safeguarding issue arises the volunteer will not be given time to change behaviour but asked to leave immediately as they are no longer supporting the aims and core values of Soundabout.

The volunteer can access the organisation's complaint procedure if they feel they wish to make a complaint.

CAN I REQUEST A REFERENCE?

Soundabout values and respects the motivation and skills of our volunteers and will be happy to provide a reference. In order to give an accurate and meaningful reference we feel a minimum of 12 volunteering sessions are needed to allow us to gain a measure of the volunteers' skills, knowledge and personal qualities.

The reference will be completed by the person supervising the volunteer or a team member most connected to their volunteering activities.

HEALTH & SAFETY

We have a duty to look after the safety and well-being of our volunteers.

This means we will make sure that appropriate precautions are taken to control and manage any significant risks, including having support sessions, training and information about any relevant health & safety policies and procedures.

Like employees, volunteers must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by what they do, or omit to do, while volunteering. Volunteers must also co-operate with our organisation in carrying out any duty or complying with any requirement imposed by relevant health and safety laws

INSURANCE

Our Organisation will indemnify (this means 'cover') its volunteers against claims made against them for injury or damage as long as the volunteer:

- a) Acted in good faith and honestly believed that they were acting within their power or duty as our volunteer and;
- b) Lets the supervisor or Board know immediately about any incident which could lead to a claim.

CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION

During induction all volunteers will be made aware of their rights under Data Protection law and the importance of respecting the confidential nature of our business, particularly in the case of sensitive information about children, young people or vulnerable adults that volunteers may have access to.

Volunteers must be made aware that any information they produce during their time volunteering may be made available to the public, if asked, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Volunteers must not have access to personal information of colleagues, children, young people or vulnerable adults unless it is deemed necessary by the charity for example in case of a medical condition that staff and volunteers should be aware of such as diabetes or epilepsy.

CAN VOLUNTEERING AFFECT MY BENEFIT CLAIMS?

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) states that:

‘You can volunteer for as many hours as you want, as long as you still meet the conditions to get your benefit or tax credit’.

As legislation varies over time it is always best for volunteers to check the latest information either with their benefits advisor or on the website www.dwp.gov.uk. It is the volunteer’s responsibility to do this.

SMOKING POLICY

Soundabout asks that volunteers do not smoke whilst volunteering or when entering or leaving any building whilst they are volunteering.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

Volunteers should not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst volunteering within Soundabout, on its grounds or supporting our activities

MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE POLICY

It will be the responsibility of Soundabout staff and the board of Trustees to regularly review this Volunteer Policy to make sure it is always in accordance with our Equal Opportunity Policy, legal requirements and best practice in relation to volunteer management. This will be done every three years or when the need arises.

	Date	Completed by	Trustee Board Approval	
First Written	2018	Jo Colton		
Updated	23/02/2021	Philippa Higginbottom		
Agreed				

Next review date	23/03/2024			