

Somerset West and Taunton

[insert volunteer project or opportunity name here]

Volunteer Handbook

Welcome

Hello, from [insert volunteer project team name or individual volunteer manager names here]! We're delighted to welcome you to [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here].

Our amazing volunteers have helped make the service the success it is. You're joining a community of friendly, dedicated, and passionate people who have loads of experience to share with you.

This handbook will help you get off to the best start on your volunteering journey and will act as a useful guide during your time at a [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here]. You can read about how your role is vital to support people getting back into employment and the impact you will have on people's lives.

You'll find out how we will support you with your volunteering and how you can contact us if you need anything.

We hope you will love volunteering at a [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here] and stay with us for a long time.

Thank you for volunteering!

From [insert volunteer project team name or individual names here]

About Us

The [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here] provides [explain what project does] for people across West Somerset and Taunton

[give a bit more detail on what the project does for the community]

We know that those who attend the [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here] benefit massively from increased confidence, self-esteem, social interaction, and health and well-being.

We can't make this happen without our amazing volunteers. People like you make it possible to [insert what volunteer help will achieve here]

We take every step possible to make sure your experience with the [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here] and Somerset West and Taunton council is as rewarding and enjoyable as possible.

Impact of our work

[insert some facts, figures and infographs or even photographs of what has been achieved with volunteers so far]

What you can expect from us

We will:

- always treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation
- make sure you have the best possible experience
- tell you about the responsibilities of your role and our policies so you know where you stand and have what you need to deliver your best
- give you appropriate training for your role and opportunities to develop your skills
- support you by holding regular meetings and informal discussions
- provide fair, honest and timely feedback regarding any concerns with performance and/or conduct
- update you on how your contribution makes a difference to people looking for work
- create a safe and respectable environment
- never forget the enormous contribution you make.

The role volunteers play.

There are so many ways you can volunteer for [insert volunteer project or opportunity name here]. Whatever you're good at is great with us. We can't wait to make the most of your skills and experience. Because we can see the huge difference volunteers like you make to people.

- [outline a few bullet points of what types of tasks the volunteer could be involved with here]

All of our roles vary in levels of experience, time commitment, and flexibility. If your commitment or the way you volunteer changes, then we can work with you to find something suitable.

You'll get great work and life experience as a volunteer.

We welcome all ages, backgrounds and experiences. What makes you special will help us reach more people in communities that [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] haven't reached yet.

Being a volunteer

When volunteering for us we expect you to uphold our values and give a great experience to everyone you meet.

In particular, we ask that you:

- Treat staff, service users, and fellow volunteers with respect, consideration and appreciation.
- Ensure the [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] stay on the right side of the law and maintain our reputation by following all appropriate policies.
- Make sure you understand your role, and the standards of performance and conduct required of you.
- Bring any support or feedback to your Volunteer Manager.
- Let your Volunteer Manager know if you'll be unavailable for certain dates or if your circumstances change.
- Do not do anything that might bring the [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] or Somerset West and Taunton Council into disrepute.

Guidance and procedures

While you are volunteering with us, we need to you follow our core procedures. This is to ensure that volunteering is safe, legal, and consistent with the values of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

You should be familiar with our guidance on:

- expenses
- health and safety including lone working
- equality, diversity, and inclusion
- keeping data safe
- safeguarding
- problem solving

Your Volunteer Manager will help you identify which procedures apply to your role. They're also there to offer help so do get in touch if you have any questions.

Expenses

We reimburse volunteers' reasonable out-of-pocket travel expenses in line with our volunteer expenses policy. Your Volunteer Manager will go through the Volunteer Expenses Policy with you to explain what is included.

Your Volunteer Manager can help you make a claim.

Please make sure you keep hold of all tickets and receipts as you will need these to reclaim your money. Please note that we'll only reimburse the amount that you have spent as a result of your volunteering, up to agreed maximum levels.

Health and Safety including lone working

Health and safety are everyone's responsibility; we all have a role to play in identifying risks and minimising harm to others.

We have a 'duty of care' requirement to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of anyone that deals with a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here]; this includes volunteers, employees, and the general public. We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our volunteers.

We want you to feel safe while you volunteer at a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here], and we want the public to feel safe using a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] too.

We will give you the necessary information and training to make sure you feel safe and know how to report any concerns.

Your Volunteer Manager will make sure you understand health and safety and is there if you have any concerns.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] are committed to equal opportunities in delivery of its service. An important part of our values is that everyone should feel respected and valued and able to achieve their full potential. It's important to us that our volunteers embrace these values and act accordingly.

Equalityⁱ

Equality is about fairness, it is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that everyone's needs are met in different ways. It is based on the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. Equality protects people from being discriminated against on the grounds of the protected characteristics.

Diversity

Diversity is about valuing all visible and non-visible differences and recognising and accepting that harnessing these differences creates an environment where everyone feels valued. A diverse approach aims to recognise value and manage differences to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

Keeping data safe

It's so important that people feel they can trust us to do the right thing by them.

A huge part of this is making sure we keep private details private. There are laws about privacy that you'll have to follow, especially when it comes to sharing and keeping information about people that could be used to identify them. Put yourself in their shoes and you'll see why this sort of protection is needed.

We all feel differently about our personal data being used in each way, so it's really important that people are fully informed about and agree to how we will use their data. It all boils down to a few simple things you need to be aware of when you collect, use and store data like names and addresses. Your role might involve you having access to sensitive personal data.

Here are six easy steps to handling people's personal data:

1. Collecting data - We should only collect what we need and be clear with people about why we are collecting it and what we'll do with it.
2. Using data - We can only use data for the specific reasons we have collected it for and not for any other reasons that we think of later.
3. Recording data - We need to make sure information is recorded in the right place, and that it is correct and up to date.
4. Storing data - We need to make sure we store data somewhere secure.
5. Sharing data - We should not share data with anyone outside of the [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] unless we have a formal agreement in place with the person and organisation involved.
6. Getting rid of data - We need to dispose of data securely whenever we no longer need the information for the reasons we collected it.

If we ask you to do a role that involves collecting, using, recording, or storing people's personal data, we will make sure you get appropriate training before you start, so you feel confident that you are getting it right.

Keeping everyone safe

Volunteering with us should be safe and enjoyable.

As a volunteer you are expected to follow some simple rules while volunteering with us and we have a duty to make sure you have the right information, training, and support to carry out your role safely.

Keeping volunteers, staff, people who use our services and the public safe from harm is our number one priority.

People who are out of work can be more vulnerable because of their financial situation and other considerations. The people we support trust us and may share aspects of their lives which concern us. It's worth bearing in mind that any adult can become vulnerable.

Your Volunteer Manager is there to offer advice and support if at any time you're emotionally challenged by something in your volunteering role or experiencing difficulties. Your health and wellbeing are very important to us.

If you're worried about someone, you must act:

- If the situation is not life threatening, contact your Volunteer Manager. They are your first point of contact. They will record and report it appropriately and make the
- Somerset County Council is the lead organisation for any concerns for the welfare of children and vulnerable adults in the Somerset area. If you are worried about a child, a young person under the age of 18, or a vulnerable adult you can contact Somerset County Council on 0300 123 2224. Then contact your Volunteer Manager.
- In any situation where someone's life is in danger, always call 999

How we support you

Your Volunteer Manager is there to provide you with support and guidance, answer any questions you have, and to help you get the best from your time at a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here]. We'll support you from the moment you start volunteering with us, to when you decide to finish.

All our volunteers get a welcome and induction from their Volunteer Manager. An induction helps you settle into your role and feel comfortable at a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here]. You'll get to meet everyone and ask any questions you have.

There is some basic training which all of our volunteers get, it might be done in person or remotely. In person training is often best delivered in groups, which might mean a short wait for it to be available. Induction Training is offered on a quarterly basis, we will make sure you get it as soon as possible. Your Volunteer Manager will let you know what's needed and how it can happen.

There's a bit of admin we need to do to get you set up. Depending on your role, this might mean we do background checks (known as a DBS check), ask for references or ask you to do a bit more paperwork. We may also give you an ID badge so you can identify yourself to people we help when you're volunteering. Please help us by providing information or returning forms as soon as you can – it means we we'll be able to get you up and running quicker.

Your Volunteer Manager will make sure you can regularly talk about what you're up to in your role and raise any issues or difficulties. Volunteering at a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] is very much a two-way street, and we are always ready to listen and chat things through. If you have ideas on how to make it better, tell us about it.

Working through any difficulties

For most people, volunteering at a [insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] is an enjoyable and rewarding experience, but occasionally, problems can happen.

It could be an issue with another volunteer, or a difficulty you have in carrying out your role. Whatever it is, we use a standard approach to make sure that we can sort things out as quickly and as fairly as possible.

We call this our Volunteer Problem Solving Policy. It has three stages:

Stage 1 – Informal

Wherever possible, we try to resolve problems informally. This means we expect people to talk to one another and try to sort issues out between themselves. Your Volunteer Manager will usually be the person to help do this unless your problem involves them directly.

Stage 2 – Formal

If it's not possible to resolve a problem informally or if it's serious then we use a formal process to properly investigate and decide what to do about it. If it's being dealt with formally, we will provide you with support and information so you can prepare properly.

Stage 3 – Appeal

Following a formal process, volunteers can appeal the decision reached if they believe that the procedure has not been followed properly or the outcome is unreasonable. An appeal is decided by a group involving senior staff.

Other helpful information

Remember, your Volunteer Manager is your first port of call for support and information while you're volunteering with us. You can always go to them with any questions, problems, or issues you might have.

Volunteer Manager Name and Contact Details

Name:

Phone number:

Email:

[insert volunteer project name or volunteering opportunity here] are located at:

ⁱ Definitions from Victim Support: https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EDI_Policy_August_2020.pdf