

The Positive Herd Project

Volunteering Policy

Last review: 15.08.2019

Next review due: 15.08.2021

Introduction

The Positive Herd Project recognises the significant and valuable role that volunteers have in creating, implementing and enhancing our services and believe that volunteering should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers.

We intend to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement in our work. For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who does voluntary work on our behalf, with voluntary work defined as: “ Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives” (Volunteering England, 2007).

Within The Positive Herd Project, volunteers are an integral component of the work we do, and serve at every level of the organisation. The input of volunteer’s work on the organisation is of huge importance and is highly valued. We could not achieve our overall aims without the contributions of reliable and committed volunteers.

We hope that volunteers will enjoy their involvement with The Positive Herd Project and meet their own personal objectives. We expect staff and volunteers to develop positive relationships based on mutual trust and responsibility.

Purpose and Advantages of adopting a Volunteer Policy

This policy presents The Positive Herd Project with a framework of best practice and procedures, which we will follow when recruiting, selecting, managing and supporting volunteers.

The policy will:

- recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers
- give a framework for recruiting and supporting volunteers including people from underrepresented groups
- commit to identify and adequately support and offset expenses incurred by the volunteer
- recognise the contribution all volunteers make in a range of ways

General

In involving volunteers we will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Volunteers receive specific role descriptions and volunteer agreements, ensuring they have clear expectations of their role.
- Volunteers have a named person as their main point of contact and are provided with regular supervision to consider progress, and discuss any concerns.
- Training and support will be offered to volunteers. We ensure that volunteers feel part of the organisational structure by enabling them to contribute to our on-going development by attending staff meetings and events
- Information given to volunteers, and forms they are asked to complete, are clear and easy to understand.
- Volunteers are reimbursed for out of pocket expenses.
- We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage; procedures are in place to deal with complaints either by or about volunteers.
- We do not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and do not expect volunteers to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or roles.
- All staff and volunteers are expected and required to follow our Equality and Diversity Policy and treat each other and all visitors with respect and fairness.
- Our Health and Safety Policy cover volunteers, and we take care not to expose volunteers to risks to their health and safety, and that of others: volunteers will have a member of staff on site with them at all times.
- There is no formal/legal agreement between The Positive Herd Project and its volunteers. When volunteers give their time for a given number of hours, this is entirely at their discretion.
- We will update our guidance in line with relevant changes in either law or in the scope of volunteer roles.

Identifying Volunteering Opportunities

If a member of staff identifies a new voluntary opportunity, they should discuss the proposal and its implications, in terms of resources and support, with their line manager.

A Volunteer Role Description will then be drawn up by the member of staff who will be the main contact for volunteers. Volunteer Role Descriptions ensure volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and will minimally include:

- The volunteer's role title.

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- A list of tasks and responsibilities.
- Times, days and location of volunteering activity.
- Skills and experience that are required.
- Whether the role is anticipated to be short term or ongoing.
- The person who will be their main contact.

Recruitment

We will use a variety of approaches to ensure we recruit volunteers that are representative of the community and the people who use our services.

The recruitment process for volunteers will help establish whether potential volunteers and The Positive Herd Project meet each other's interests and needs. The process will include an application form, an informal interview and an introductory session where the volunteer will learn about the organisation and voluntary roles available. Recruitment will be in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy and current legislation.

Some volunteers may be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before starting their work. All volunteers should inform the organisation if they have any criminal convictions. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent anyone from working with The Positive Herd Project, only relevant convictions will be taken into account with regards to the specific voluntary role.

At any point in the selection process, if a potential volunteer is considered unsuitable for a particular role then they will be informed of the reasons why. If possible an alternative role within the organisation may be suggested, or support given to find one elsewhere. Everybody's contributions are valid and appreciated.

Volunteer Manager

All volunteers will have a named Volunteer Manager who shall be responsible for:

- Providing the volunteer with a Volunteer Role Description.
- Organising and facilitating the Induction Training.
- Ensuring that volunteers are aware of relevant policies and where to find these.
- Ensuring volunteers have adequate work space, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely.
- Providing regular support and feedback to volunteers. They will also be the main point of contact for volunteers to give their feedback or raise concerns.
- Making up and maintaining a file for the volunteer. The file will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act and our Confidentiality

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Policy. The file will contain the application form, volunteer agreement, induction record, record of the activities undertaken, supervision record and training record.

- Providing on-going support including one to one meetings on a regular basis.

Training

All volunteers will receive an induction to The Positive Herd Project and to their specific role. This will include being made aware of all relevant policies and procedures, and understanding the volunteer's responsibilities within the organisation, health and safety and safeguarding. A practical induction will also be arranged to introduce the volunteer to their work space and duties.

Horse care volunteers will need to attend the monthly Horse Care Volunteer Training Programme, and complete stage 1. All volunteers have the opportunity to attend these trainings, and will be supported to access additional training where necessary.

Ongoing training for volunteers will be arranged in the form of group training days, or through individual supervisions. If the volunteer feels they need more support or training then this should be raised with the Volunteer Manger.

Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers will sign a Volunteer Agreement, which outlines the voluntary arrangement between the volunteer and The Positive Herd Project. It will also be signed by the Volunteer Manager. It is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. This agreement is intended to be flexible enough to take account of changes in a Volunteer's circumstances or in the requirements of The Positive Herd Project.

Volunteer Expenses

The Positive Herd Project is committed to meeting reasonable expenses incurred by our volunteers, providing the resources are available.

These will include

- Travel between home and place of volunteering activity. This includes public transport or a mileage allowance. If traveling by public transport, the ticket must be retained, by way of a receipt. If the volunteer is using his/her own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept.
- If a journey is in excess of 15 miles (round trip) volunteers are required to check the arrangements with the Volunteer Manager beforehand. Volunteers, claiming this allowance, must notify their motor insurance company and ensure their policy specifically includes "business use".
- Car parking charges. The car park ticket must be retained, by way of receipt.

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- If volunteering longer than five hours in any one period then a subsistence allowance may be paid for meals. The volunteer manager will discuss this at induction.

The volunteer is responsible for keeping a record of their own expenses. Expenses forms should be provided to the Volunteer Manager to sign off at the end of the month and are paid on a monthly basis retrospectively.

The Positive Herd Project is not responsible for paying fines or penalties incurred by the volunteer during any activities. All expenses claimed must be reasonable and effort should be taken to keep them to a minimum. The Positive Herd Project is a small charitable organisation and as such resources are limited.

Problem Solving

In any organisation, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that this will not be the case, if there are any concerns volunteers should in the first instance speak to the Volunteer Manager who will try and resolve the matter informally.

If the matter remains unresolved then the problem will be dealt with in line with the Grievance Procedure. All complaints will be dealt with confidentially and in a timely manner.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer then this shall be brought up privately by the Volunteer Manager. Any reasonable steps will be taken to rectify the problem, through extra support, training or supervision. If a volunteer does not meet our standards of performance or the steps we have taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer will be offered more suitable voluntary activities. If behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred, then the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately.

Ending Involvement

Although both The Positive Herd Project and a volunteer can end their volunteering arrangement at any time and without any notice, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, The Positive Herd Project will aim to give a volunteer at least 2 weeks' notice, hoping that they will offer the same to us.

Where a specific role has proved unsuitable for a volunteer, or the role they hold has come to a natural conclusion, then the Volunteer Manager will support the volunteer to explore other options, either within The Positive Herd Project or elsewhere.

The decision to ask a volunteer to leave will be a last resort. It may be necessary ask a volunteer to leave due to poor performance, misconduct, attendance problems or DBS issues. Every effort will be made to ensure that the reasons for ending an involvement are clarified, recorded and shared with the volunteer.

References

If asked, either during a volunteer's time with us or when it ends, we will supply a reference, based on a volunteer's service, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

Insurance

The Positive Herd Project's volunteers are covered by its Employers and Public liability insurance policies. The organisation is responsible for the actions of its employees and volunteers in the course of their duties and will take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimise accident, injury, loss or damage.