






## NAS Volunteer Policy

This volunteer policy recognises the significant and valuable role volunteers play in supporting the National Allotment Society (NAS) and its membership in achieving the mission of the society whilst following the agreed standards and procedures.

It aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards and best practice is maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

The Society recognise volunteers as an integral part of the organisation. Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims and complements the role of paid staff, we could not achieve our goals without their hard work. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, its members and the volunteers themselves.

The NAS's volunteers support the organisation in a number of ways, including:

-  Supporting regional activities in the promotion and preservation of allotments
-  Supporting community allotment initiatives
-  Mentoring members to support creation of new allotments
-  Delivering our courses.
-  Driving strategic projects and aims of the Society

### Values and Principles

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, the National Allotment Society cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, people with a disability, older people and people from ethnically diverse communities.

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteers and are committed to making the NAS the best organisation to volunteer with.

### Purpose and scope

The policy is to ensure that volunteers are properly deployed and valued, and reflects our commitment to volunteering at the NAS. Unless specifically stated, these policies apply to all elected non-elected volunteers in the society, and will be provided to all volunteers at the time of their induction.

This policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers and what we expect from them, and what they can expect from us in return.

Responsibility for this policy and supporting documents rests with the NAS.

## **A Volunteer at the National Allotment Society**

Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activities, performs a task at the direction of, and on behalf of, the society and does not receive financial compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses. They work within clearly defined roles to complement and enhance the activities offered by the Society and to add value to the membership.

Volunteers may be involved in one off or short-term projects or on a longer term or regular basis. Which may include the direct delivery of our services, raising awareness of our work or in one off events and shows

The NAS volunteer is someone who chooses to give their time and expertise in an unpaid capacity to support the NAS in achieving its aims.

### **Roles and responsibilities**











The Society Secretary has responsibility for the development, management and co-ordination of voluntary activity within the organisation, including volunteering policies and procedures and the welfare of volunteers.

All volunteers will have a designated named staff member (Company Secretary)/volunteer who will provide guidance, support and supervision to the volunteer to ensure that the volunteering experience is a positive and rewarding one.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no contractual obligation, or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for the organisation to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

### **The society expects volunteers:**

-  To be reliable and honest
-  To uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies
-  To make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
-  To contribute positively to the aims and objectives of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
-  To carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
-  To adhere to NAS's confidentiality policy at all times
-  To take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others
-  To raise any concerns with their supervisor immediately
-  To report any accidents, incidents, injuries or 'near misses'
-  To report any safety practices that need to be improved or risks not otherwise identified

- 🚩 To treat everyone with dignity and respect
- 🚩 To set an example you would wish others to follow
- 🚩 To treat all members equally - show no favouritism
- 🚩 To encourage others to challenge any attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- 🚩 To keep other volunteers/members of staff informed of where you are and what you are doing
- 🚩 To remember someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned

### **Volunteers can expect**

- 🚩 To have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- 🚩 To receive adequate support and training relevant to role
- 🚩 To be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- 🚩 To receive reimbursement for out of pocket expenses
- 🚩 to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment
- 🚩 To have opportunities for personal development
- 🚩 To be recognised and appreciated
- 🚩 To be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- 🚩 To know what to do if something goes wrong

### **Training and support**

Volunteers will have a valuable set of skills, knowledge and attitudes gained from their education, work, allotment experience, and life experiences.

All volunteers will receive a full introduction to the organisation and the required appropriate training to perform the agreed tasks which fall within their role. They will understand why volunteers are involved and will be given induction and other training for any specific tasks

Each volunteer will be offered a six-week taster period. At the end of the period, they will meet with their named contact. If both are happy with the placement, they will continue in their role.

### **Induction and training**

To help ensure that volunteers are appropriately equipped for their role, each volunteer must undergo the induction and training process into the NAS and their own region prior to commencing their role, alongside continuous training, where appropriate, whilst volunteering with the NAS.

We run training courses throughout the year and give all an opportunity to attend webinars and the Annual Development Programme.

### **Support and Supervision**

Each volunteer will be offered support and supervision as appropriate and this is discussed during induction and will be reviewed regularly. This might include regular, appropriate and mutually agreed contact from head office as well as regional support and may include telephone support, group meetings or one to one review.

We recommend that each region holds volunteer meetings at least every quarter to allow volunteers the opportunity to speak with staff (where invited) and other volunteers, as well as to raise any queries or concerns this may be done in person or via Zoom.

## **Recognition**

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation at regional and staff and partnership meetings and through the Annual Experiences of volunteering with us survey.

The NAS will also provide appropriate recognition and occasions to celebrate volunteers and their work, on an individual and group basis, according to specific role, commitment and length of service. Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through the magazine and website articles, annual reports, social media, and during Volunteers' Week award celebrations

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion.**

The NAS is committed to building a diverse organisation that is responsive to the needs of its members, volunteers and staff.

The NAS is also committed to equal opportunities at all stages of recruitment, selection and volunteering. Short-listing, interviewing and selection of volunteers will always be carried out without regard to protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

The NAS will not condone, accept or ignore any forms of discrimination or unacceptable behaviour.

Whilst volunteers are not employees and are therefore not protected as employees under the Equality Act, it is not acceptable to discriminate against them. We will ensure that volunteering opportunities are inclusive and available to all. Volunteers still have a right not to be discriminated against, in the same way as a member has this right.

All volunteers will be expected to have an understanding and commitment to equal opportunities and diversity and should therefore ensure that they have read NAS's Equal Opportunities Policy. Volunteers are expected to comply with this policy at all times. Volunteers may also request training in respect of diversity issues if they feel that would assist them in their volunteering role.

## **Safeguarding**

Volunteers taking on roles that are eligible for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, or equivalent, will be required to undertake a relevant check. The society follows the procedures outlined by the Disclosure and Barring Service to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. This is not carried out as routine and will be assessed at the start of any new project or on request of the volunteer.

## **Health and safety**





Volunteers must take reasonable care of themselves and others while volunteering for the NAS, and follow any health and safety advice and instruction given for their role. Volunteers should cooperate with the NAS on health and safety matters, and immediately report accidents/incidents (including near misses – accidents/incidents that may have led to injury see near miss form). Volunteers should

not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

The NAS will ensure that all volunteers are provided with the appropriate information, supervision and training required to enable them to complete voluntary work safely. This includes providing suitable systems and procedures and guidance, where PPE is required, the society will provide this as they would an employee.

Volunteers will be trained in conducting risk assessments and individual risk assessments for the role, covering both the tasks involved and the environment in which they will the work will be carried out. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary.

Factors that will be considered as appropriate to the circumstances are:

-  The environment – location, security, access
-  The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
-  The individuals concerns – indicators of potential or actual risk
-  History – any previous incidents in similar situations

## **Expenses**

The work of the NAS is critically dependent on our extensive network of volunteers. We are very grateful to the vast number of volunteers who do not claim expenses; however, we will always look to reimburse reasonable expenses if there are financial barriers to volunteering. Please note that your region will only reimburse expenses if previously agreed and based on the requirements of the NAS and the available budget.

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim please refer to the Expenses policy. The NAS is committed to paying reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses incurred by volunteering activities, ensuring that potential volunteers are not excluded due to financial reasons.

### **Volunteers in Receipt of Benefits**

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to establish whether volunteering is going to affect their entitlement to any benefits. Further advice should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus or Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **Insurance**

National Allotment Society's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. The NAS does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. The insurance will not cover unauthorised actions or actions outside the volunteering agreement.

Motor insurance cover is not provided by the NAS. Where volunteers drive as part of their voluntary activity, and use their own vehicle, they must ensure they possess the relevant class of insurance. Further guidance should be sought from the volunteer's own insurance company.

## **Data protection and confidentiality**

The NAS will protect volunteer information in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Data will be held securely and confidentially and will only be accessed by authorised individuals. Contact details may be published in the magazine and website and may be given to the membership, unless advised by the volunteer.

We expect all volunteers to comply with the NAS's Data Protection Policy and associated policies which will be fully explained to you during the induction process.

When volunteering with the NAS, volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the NAS, its staff, members and third parties which may include use of IT systems as part of their role, volunteers must read, understand and sign up to our Confidentiality policy prior to starting their role. We require all volunteers to sign a Confidentiality Agreement, as you may come across information which is of a confidential nature. It is important that you do not disclose any confidential information. You must also let your lead contact know immediately if you are uncomfortable with any issues or if there is a possibility of a breach of confidentiality or a conflict of interest.

## **Intellectual property**

When signing our Volunteer Commitment, a volunteer assigns, by way of future assignment to the NAS, all Intellectual Property created by them as part of their role as a NAS volunteer or credited to them during the term of their volunteering, provided that the assignment shall not include intellectual property which is not connected in any way whatsoever whether directly or indirectly with their volunteering.

## **Dealing with problems**

Although the NAS makes every effort to ensure that any experience of volunteering with us is positive and rewarding, we recognise that volunteers at times may experience difficulty within their role or they may want to share feedback or raise an issue with a member of staff or another volunteer. In the first instance, volunteers should talk to the Society Company Secretary to try to resolve the issue, get advice or share feedback. We will make every reasonable effort to resolve difficulties at an early stage and we always review feedback and learn from it.

Then society aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly. Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the organisation.

We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. This should be done discreetly and limited to a discussion between the volunteer and their regional lead or Society Company secretary in the first instance.

As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the NAS Grievance Policy and Procedure. However, they are entitled to use the Complaints Procedure. Complaints by volunteers should be

raised in the first instance within the region, and dealt with informally where possible. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully.

If a complaint is made against a volunteer, every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. Where informal resolution is not possible, and if appropriate, the society will refer to the NAS rules and Standards and procedures.

Advice can be taken at any point from either the society secretary or other appropriate member of staff. The volunteer should be made aware that this is happening.

The ultimate decision on the future of the volunteer should involve the society company secretary and representatives of the management committee from within the society.

### **Saying goodbye to volunteers**

While there is no employment relationship and no contractual obligation exists, we ask that any volunteer who no longer wishes to actively volunteer with us lets us know by speaking with their regional contact or the Society Secretary.

Volunteers are free to cease volunteering with the NAS at any time by speaking or writing to their named contact. When deciding to finish volunteering with us, we ask that volunteers give us as much notice as possible to help us organise alternative arrangements.

When volunteers move on from volunteering with us, they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire which will help the NAS improve our volunteer opportunities. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their questionnaire answers more fully.

Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 12 months will have the right to request a reference.










There are many different ways to support membership through the NAS and so we encourage volunteers to stay in touch and get involved in the future. There may also be times when the NAS will ask a volunteer to cease volunteering. This may be because the role no longer supports the needs of the organisation and its current work, or because the volunteer is no longer able to satisfactorily carry out a particular role. When this happens, we will endeavour to give as much notice as possible to the volunteer and try to find an acceptable alternative role. In all cases, the volunteer will be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

## Guidance on Lone Working








Practical hints and tips for volunteers whose roles require them to work alone without direct support or supervision. Depending on the actual volunteering role, only some of this guidance will be applicable.

Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated location, adverse weather conditions for driving). If there are, discuss them with your named regional lead/named member of staff before setting off. Take and use any other personal protective equipment provided or identified in the risk assessment.






Travelling by car which might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night:

-  Plan your route and take appropriate maps
-  Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather
-  Keep valuables out of sight
-  Park in well-lit areas, if possible, with the car facing in the direction of exit; when returning to the vehicle, check the back seat
-  Carry a mobile phone for emergency use
-  Do not pick up hitchhikers
-  Carry a torch at night
-  If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help
-  If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened

### Road rage

-  Unfortunately, this type of incident is becoming more common. If at any time you are confronted by this situation, it is important that you do nothing to escalate it further
-  Do not stop to confront the third party
-  If a car pulls in front of you and you are approached, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and windows closed; keep the engine running and drive away as soon safe and possible to do so
-  If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash lights etc. To gain others' attention
-  If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until you reach a busy area such as a 24-hour garage
-  If you are stationary and have a mobile phone, ring the emergency services
-  If you have to walk, wear high visibility clothing if possible

### Travelling by public transport

-  Plan your route (outward and return) in advance
-  Try to avoid travelling alone late at night
-  Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits
-  Have your fare/ticket ready and separate from other valuables
-  Try to keep one hand free



- 🚩 Sit downstairs on double-decker buses
- 🚩 Try to avoid falling asleep

#### Travelling on foot

- 🚩 Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings
- 🚩 Keep one hand free if possible
- 🚩 Avoid short-cuts, underpasses or poorly lit areas
- 🚩 Walk facing on-coming traffic
- 🚩 Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers
- 🚩 Keep valuables out of site and avoid areas where groups may gather e.g. clubs, pubs etc.
- 🚩 Avoid wearing ear buds, ear phones
- 🚩 If you carry a personal alarm, ensure that it works and that you can quickly access it