Volunteering policy

Getting the most from your volunteering experience

Accept difference. Not indifference.
Welcome

“Welcome to volunteering with The National Autistic Society! As a volunteer, you contribute your time, energy and skills to help and support people with autism. Thank you for your commitment to people with an autism spectrum disorder, their families and The National Autistic Society.”

Carol Homden, NAS Chair of Trustees and Volunteer

Our commitment to volunteering

Volunteers are vital to our work. Volunteers are our representatives in communities all over the UK. They are integral to the structure and operation of the charity and contribute strongly to our aims and objectives. We intend to further increase the involvement of volunteers in our activities at all levels.

Who is this policy for?

This policy is intended for volunteers who have accepted an agreed role with the charity. It outlines the principles on which the relationship between volunteers and the charity are based and provides basic information about volunteering with us.

Volunteers support our work by giving their time to carry out roles which have been agreed
by the individual and The National Autistic Society. This volunteering relationship is based on trust and respect, and does not involve the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than the reimbursement of agreed expenses, is made by the organisation to people who give their time as volunteers.

**The recruitment process for volunteers**

We welcome and respect the breadth of experience, skills, dedication and goodwill that volunteers bring. Informal interviews are carried out to ensure that applicants are suitable for the role in question and we will base our selection on the ability of each applicant to fulfil the role concerned, taking into account any effect volunteers may have on the safety of all parties, the our brand and our reputation.
Volunteering with us

**Age range of volunteers**
In most cases you will need to be over 16 years of age to volunteer independently and under 18s will be asked for parental consent (subject to variations in national laws within the UK). Younger people may engage in some aspects of volunteering with us, if they are accompanied by a responsible adult. We do not have an upper age limit but there may be situations that require us to ask someone to stop volunteering, for example where health issues are considered a risk to the volunteer concerned, or others around them.

**Getting started**
Welcome to your new role. To ensure that you have all you need to get started, we will either provide you with an induction or direct you to the appropriate information. You will have a named member of staff or experienced volunteer as your main contact and they will be able to help you feel comfortable and confident in your role, and answer any questions that you may have about your volunteering. Where appropriate, you will be asked to provide suitable identity documents to allow us to carry out checks with an agency authorised by the relevant UK government.

**Equal opportunities and diversity**
You will be volunteering with an organisation that is committed to equal opportunities and diversity. This commitment is clearly stated throughout our policies and practices.
Responsibilities and expectations
We want you to enjoy volunteering with us and we take our responsibilities towards you very seriously. As a volunteer you will also be a representative of the charity, and as such, we ask that you act appropriately.

Our responsibilities are to:

› offer equal opportunities to everyone who wants to volunteer
› match your skills and experiences with the right role for you, wherever possible, listening to your motivations and aspirations
› offer appropriate training and support for your role
› celebrate success and recognise loyalty and dedication
› respect all our volunteers and listen to what you have to say, consistently encouraging two-way communication
› provide suitable information about our work, policies and procedures
› reimburse agreed out-of-pocket expenses
› make necessary arrangements to ensure your health, safety and welfare
› encourage a positive and friendly atmosphere
› provide access to trained members of staff, to support, guide and advise you.
We expect our volunteers to:

› aim for high standards of efficiency, reliability and quality in your volunteering, especially in fulfilling the requirements of your role profile
› work in partnership with other volunteers and staff
› support, respect and adhere to our policies, guidelines and management decisions – including all aspects of equal opportunities, health and safety, data protection and use of our brand
› always consider our good reputation in your actions and conduct, acting responsibly and within the law
› let your staff contact know first, if you have any problems, so that we can resolve them together
› let your staff contact know if there are changes in your personal circumstances that may affect your volunteering
› try to have the best possible experience by getting involved and enjoying your time spent volunteering.
Your volunteering experience

Health and safety
We are committed to ensuring your well-being and safety whilst you are volunteering and in turn, we expect our volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe working environment.

All volunteers must:
> take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions or omissions
> co-operate with staff by assisting them to fulfil their statutory duties
> follow the health and safety policy and measures put in place by The National Autistic Society or any organisation on whose premises they may be volunteering
> report accidents/incidents to a member of staff, irrespective of whether any person has been injured
> be aware of actions to take when an emergency situation arises and who to contact for support.

Copyright, intellectual property and photography
The rights to any original works that you may produce whilst volunteering will belong to The National Autistic Society, unless otherwise agreed. Examples would include photography,
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artwork, graphic design and written works, including the results of research. Photographs of volunteers carrying out their roles may be used for promotional purposes, such as printed leaflets or on our website. You may, of course, request that an image is withdrawn.

**Media relations**
No comments or stories should be given directly to the media without prior permission. Media relations are handled by our press office, therefore all media enquiries should be forwarded to them. We also have guidelines available to help you with social media.

**Data protection and confidentiality**
We take great care to safeguard your information as part of our data protection responsibilities. As a volunteer, we expect you to protect any personal or confidential information you may come into contact with.

**Expenses**
Volunteers may request reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel costs and, where appropriate, a sandwich meal or equivalent. Expenses must be authorised by your staff contact in advance and receipts or tickets will be required.
**Insurance**

We have appropriate insurance in place to cover our volunteers. These include adequate liability insurance, in the event of a volunteer being harmed due to the negligence of the charity, or injury to a third party as a result of the actions of a volunteer whilst performing our activities. However, our insurance does not cover your personal belongings.

**Using your own vehicle**

We prefer you to use public transport whenever this is reasonable, as we do not provide motor insurance for you as a volunteer. Driving in connection with charitable volunteering is normally classified by insurers as “social, domestic and pleasure” which is part of your standard cover. We recommend that you check with your insurer before using your vehicle for this purpose, but there should not usually be an additional charge. Your staff contact will be able to advise you further.

**Training and development**

You will have access to training or information to help you successfully carry out your volunteering role. You will be offered an appropriate induction including information about the volunteering environment and any equipment you may be using in your role. If you agree to take on an
additional or alternative role or activity as a volunteer, your staff contact will be happy to help you widen or develop your skills and knowledge as appropriate.

Resolving concerns
If you have any problems or complaints about your volunteering experience, please talk to your staff contact immediately. The charity takes the concerns of its volunteers very seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve any difficulties. Your staff contact or the Volunteering and Branches Department will be able to help and advise you, should you need to make a complaint.

Accountability
We have a responsibility to check and audit our activities to maintain our reputation as a trustworthy charity which manages donations honestly and efficiently, including money raised by local branches. Your staff contact will be able to inform you how we do this in practice, if you would like to know more.

If you find that any member of staff or volunteer is behaving in a way that is likely to bring the charity into disrepute or cause financial loss, you should discuss your concerns with your staff contact immediately.
Further information
We recognise that your contribution as a volunteer is vital to our work. The following policies and procedures, which cover both staff and volunteers in their work, may also be of interest:

› Equal opportunities
› Data protection
› Health and safety
› Social media guidelines
  (email socialmedia@nas.org.uk for a copy)

If you would like a copy of any of the above documents, please ask your staff contact or the Volunteering and Branches Department.

Support and advice
For further information or advice on any aspect of volunteering with us, please ask your staff contact or the Volunteering and Branches Department:

The National Autistic Society
Volunteering and Branches Department
393, City Road
London
EC1V 1NG

Email: volunteering@nas.org.uk
For more information visit www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer

Thank you
We appreciate everything that you do to support us. Without our volunteers we simply would not be able to continue all of our vital work.
We are the leading UK charity for people with autism (including Asperger syndrome) and their families. We provide information, support and pioneering services, and campaign for a better world for people with autism.

Over 500,000 people in the UK have autism. Together with their families they make up over two million people whose lives are touched by autism every single day. Despite this, autism is still relatively unknown and misunderstood. This means that many people don't get the level of help, support and understanding they need. Together, we are going to change this.

From good times to challenging times, The National Autistic Society is there at every stage, to help transform the lives of everyone living with autism.

We are proud of the difference we make.