

Lancaster Green Spaces - Volunteer policy v.1

Context and overview

Key details

- Policy prepared by: Simon Gershon, Trustee
- Approved by trustees on: 22/11/2018
- Policy operational on: 1/12/2018
- Next review date: 1/12/2020

Introduction

This volunteer policy sets out the reasons and ways we involve volunteers in the charity, Lancaster Green Spaces. We want to create a common understanding, and to clarify roles and responsibilities. We want to engage with our volunteers in the fairest and most productive ways.

Our commitments

Lancaster Green Spaces is a volunteer-led organisation and has never had paid staff. Trustees and other volunteers are essential. Their contribution supports our charity's Object, which is **"The preservation, enhancement and maintenance of public areas and amenities in the City of Lancaster** [i.e. Lancaster District] **for the benefit of the public"**. We support volunteer involvement to benefit the organisation, the natural environment, and the volunteers themselves.

We may pay independent contractors and consultants to help deliver our projects. They will be clear about the value and role of volunteers, and will maintain good working relationships with volunteers. Contractors and consultants may coordinate and lead volunteering tasks.

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

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteering, and will seek to ensure adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteers.

We recognise that people can contribute in many ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of the charity, unpaid and of their own free choice. It is undertaken to be of community benefit and is not undertaken for financial gain.

We recognise that skills and experience we provide may help volunteers in paid employment, and we welcome this. However, our focus is in delivering benefits to the public, the environment, and personally to our volunteers.

Trustees are volunteers with responsibility for governance of the charity.

Volunteers may be involved on a one – off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved:

- in the direct delivery of our projects

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- as trustees of Lancaster Green Spaces
- to raise awareness of our work and promote our activities
- to encourage others to volunteer
- to help administer the charity

Volunteers are valued for:

- bringing additional skills and new perspectives to the charity
- enabling us to be more responsive and effective
- championing our cause within the wider community
- improving the quality of our activities
- promoting the well-being of local residents, other volunteers and themselves.

Standards of good practice

Our management practice is informed by the Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard for volunteer management. (<https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk>)

Roles and responsibilities

A designated trustee (The Volunteer Co-ordinator) has responsibility for the development and co-ordination of voluntary activity within the organisation, including volunteering policies and procedures, and volunteer welfare. All volunteers will have a designated consultant or trustee they can approach for guidance and support.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks, or for the charity 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.

- Lancaster Green Spaces expects volunteers:
 - to be reliable and honest
 - to uphold the charity's values and comply with organisational policies
 - to make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
 - to contribute positively to the aims of the charity and avoid bringing the charity into disrepute
 - to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- Volunteers can expect:
 - to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
 - to receive adequate support and training
 - to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment
 - to be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
 - to receive out of pocket expenses whenever funding allows.
 - to have opportunities for personal development

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- 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

Recruitment and selection

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruiting volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted, to attract interest from different sectors of the community. Online application will be encouraged, but non-digital methods of application will also be available.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including written role/task descriptions of the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required and benefits. Risk assessments will be undertaken for all volunteer activities.

Recruitment for roles within the charity will usually involve an informal interview, application form and the taking of references; the process will be defined and consistent for any given role - for example the recruitment process for trustees.

Where applicants are not able to be placed in their preferred role, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles, or signposted to other organisations such as Lancaster CVS.

For roles which involve positions of trust with direct contact with young people or vulnerable adults, volunteers will be required to have a full DBS disclosure check which will be arranged by the charity. DBS disclosures are dealt with in the strictest confidence. A criminal record is not necessarily a bar to volunteering.

Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

Support and supervision

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate and this will be discussed during induction. Arrangements vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken, and may include telephone support, group meetings or one to one reviews.

Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions with the charity's trustees. Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through annual reports, website articles and social media

Dealing with problems

Lancaster Green Spaces aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and fully taken into consideration.

We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named trustee to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. Where informal resolution is not possible, the charity's complaints policy will be adhered to.

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.

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Expenses

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim.

Moving on

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. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully.

Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 3 months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other organisations.

Other relevant policies

Other policies relevant to volunteers include:

Health and Safety, Equality & Diversity, Confidentiality, Social media, Safeguarding, Complaints, Data Protection, Ex-offenders