

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Nature Plymouth



At Plymouth City Council and through Nature Plymouth we treat all volunteers with respect and value them as individuals contributing to the volunteering movement.

We recognise that volunteers are not unpaid staff but people making a valuable and complementary contribution to our work and everyone's environment.

We will provide a safe working environment for all volunteers and will seek to train and educate volunteers to levels suitable for their role whilst on activities.

Nature Plymouth will involve volunteers in several roles:

- Work experience placements working under staff management to achieve a local strategic objective or on defined aspects of a Nature Plymouth programme.
- Key volunteers working under staff management to support delivery of a specific project – e.g. Poole Farm, Active Neighbourhoods
- Volunteers participating in Nature Plymouth's general volunteering activities.

Each role has a similar but distinct support system. The support and management provided is in proportion to the commitment demonstrated by the volunteer and suitable for the role undertaken.

In return for their services volunteers will receive a sense of identity/fulfilment, social contact and involvement within the community, together with an opportunity for personal development or continuing professional practice.

Nature Plymouth sets high standards of behaviour for all staff and volunteers and does not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour. Standards of behaviour are set out in our code of conduct.

If an incident occurs we will talk to the people involved in private and explain exactly what we would like them to change in their behaviour.

When they understand and change they are very welcome in volunteering activities. If they do not respond positively to repeated requests to change their behaviour, they will be subject to formal disciplinary procedures.

If anyone behaves in a way to commit serious misconduct (violence, theft, drug abuse, non-compliance with safety plan, harassment, etc.) they will be asked to leave immediately in line with the disciplinary procedure. All volunteers and employees have a responsibility to comply with this policy.

Nature Plymouth is an inclusive organisation and with that in mind our Equality and Diversity Policy is designed to ensure that everybody feels valued and safe. We welcome people from all backgrounds whether their interest is to volunteer, participate on a training course or join our staff. Everyone has a responsibility to work towards Equality. Like Health & Safety, it is not an option – it is policy.

Through careful risk management and diligent planning we aim to provide a safe and healthy working environment for everyone, involved in our activities.

In return, those working for and with Nature Plymouth are expected to take reasonable care of themselves and those around them. We ask everyone working with us on a paid or voluntary basis to help us achieve our Health and Safety goals by co-operating with policies, procedures and instructions.

We actively encourage you to comment on our safety performance and inform us of any concerns either directly to your line manager or if you are uncomfortable raising it with local staff contact the Health and Safety team. These will be treated seriously and investigated promptly. Only through monitoring and review can we strive to maintain high standards of health, safety and welfare.

Code of Conduct

There are 4 core values that we expect all volunteers and staff to respect whilst being involved with Nature Plymouth. These values are demonstrated through behaviour that represents them. This has been agreed by staff and volunteers and will be reviewed annually.

Responsible

We all take responsibility for our actions, care about their impact on others and expect others to do the same

Fair

We will be open and honest in how we act, treat everyone with respect and champion equality.

Democratic

We will allow people to speak about what is important to them and support them to make a difference.

Partners

We will provide strong community leadership to achieve common ambitions.

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

The purpose of this disciplinary policy is to give guidance on how to deal with breaches of the standards of behaviour and conduct expected of Council volunteers.

This procedure is designed to promote fairness and consistency of treatment in disciplinary matters relating to Council volunteers and to emphasise and encourage improvement in individual conduct. This procedure is therefore viewed as remedial rather than punitive.

Informal action

Line managers are encouraged to deal with low level and minor issues of capability or conduct informally, in the first instance. The benefits of informal action are:

- Minor breaches of discipline can often be dealt with informally with benefits to the volunteer, the manager and the Council. The advantage of this approach is to resolve the problem under consideration or correct the inappropriate behaviour as quickly as possible to reduce the risk of disruption of a team, de-motivation and absenteeism.
- However, the manager should monitor and review the situation, and failure to improve or a repetition of the offence may lead to formal action being necessary
- Informal action can take the form of a caution or a reprimand, which may be sufficient to correct an volunteer's behaviour.

Informal process

Informal action may not always be practical, possible or appropriate. For example, it would be inappropriate to respond to an allegation of gross misconduct using informal methods.

Informal action may take the form of discussions between the supervisor or line manager and a volunteer, to establish the facts of the case. If, during this informal discussion, it becomes apparent that formal action may be necessary, the manager must adjourn the meeting and tell the volunteer why the meeting has stopped and that a new formal meeting will be arranged for another time, which will be mutually agreed.

The reason for the adjournment is that a volunteer has a right to be accompanied at a formal meeting and the volunteer must be notified of this right and be given every opportunity to arrange for a representative.

Accompaniment at an informal meeting can be a trade union representative or a work colleague.

Whilst there is no statutory right for formal representation at an informal meeting, an employee may wish to bring a companion with them for support. Reasonable requests should be considered, particularly in the case of vulnerable or special groups, however, managers reserve the right to refuse requests (see section 8.7).

Informal meetings are, by their nature, unofficial. However, managers should make notes as these may be required to inform future actions, e.g. used as part of an on-going fact finding exercise.

Possible outcomes of informal action

There may be a number of possible outcomes from informal action, including the following:

- No further action is necessary.
- Objective setting to improve individual conduct or performance including specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-specific objectives set by the manager and discussed and agreed with the volunteer.
- Training needs may be identified and a programme of learning and development may be implemented, with consultation and support from appropriate training resources. The timescale for this training programme will depend on individual circumstances of each case.
- A recommendation that the volunteer seeks an occupational health referral for consultation, counselling or medical assessment.

- Monitor and review the situation, perhaps as part of the line manager's regular supervision and performance management.
- Formal action pending the outcome of a formal investigation or disciplinary action.

Formal action

Where there is ongoing concern about the behaviour of a volunteer in breach of the code of conduct or relevant policies then the line manager shall have the right to:

Request that the volunteer does not attend further activities until a suitable investigation has taken place.

Once any necessary investigation has been carried out then the line manager, one other independent person as chosen by the line manager and the volunteer shall arrange a mutually convenient time for a formal disciplinary meeting. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied at this meeting.

The meeting shall report the findings of the investigation and the volunteer shall have a right to respond. If agreed that behaviour has not met the standards expected then a formal verbal and written warning will be given which includes actions agreed to rectify the issues that have arisen. This warning will remain on a volunteer's records (as held only by Plymouth City Council) indefinitely.

A further meeting will be held no later than month from the first to review progress. If at any point there are further breaches of code conduct or policies then the steps above shall be repeated but if after a formal meeting behaviour is still not meeting the required standards the line manager will have the right to ask the volunteer to leave the project.

Grievance Policy and Procedure

It is important that all grievances are dealt with in a professional manner. This means reporting any concerns or issues that you may have as a volunteer to a member of staff.

The best way to resolve any grievance or complaint is to have a conversation about what is troubling the volunteer and work together to implement a solution. It is important that grievances are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Volunteers should come to their line manager with their complaint or concern either verbally or in writing or they may invite you to a meeting or a catch up (if their grievance was presented in writing, ensure they are happy to handle the grievance informally).

Although there is no statutory right to be accompanied during informal stages we encourage volunteers to be accompanied if they feel they require support at a meeting.

Set something up to discuss the issue informally in the right setting - away from the office, in private. Do this promptly. Any delays may escalate the query further.

The grievance should be discussed promptly between line manager and volunteer in the most suitable forum - away from the office, in private. Avoid email as this will not give you enough insight into the issue being raised.

This should allow you to discuss the details of the issue, exploring the reasons behind the facts and allow the volunteer has to express themselves without interruption and with suitable space to talk about their concerns.

Discussions should encourage the volunteer to identify what they see as the solution. The line manager should make suggestions and/or discuss alternative options to resolve the issue if appropriate.

The line manager should summarise what has been said to check their understanding of the situation and make a record of the discussion and the agreed outcomes and actions.

The line manager has the responsibility to ensure that they follow any actions up if necessary.

The meeting may need to be reconvened with the volunteer to find out some more information depending on the issue raised or to think about the decision/response. The line manager should:

- Confirm receipt of the grievance and that they will be investigating the complaint
- Ensure that it is not a repeat grievance that has already been investigated (if so the line manager has the right to dismiss the grievance if it is considered to have already been dealt with)
- Find out what attempts have been made (if any) to resolve the situation informally,
- Clarify the facts
- Clarify what evidence is available
- Find out whether there are any witnesses

Finally within 10 days the line manager should meet again with the volunteer to report back on the preferred outcome to resolve the grievance.

VOLUNTEER ACCEPTANCE AGREEMENT

Volunteers are an important and valued part of Nature Plymouth's activities. We appreciate the time you give to volunteering with us, and hope you find your volunteering experience enjoyable and rewarding.

This agreement basically tells you what you can expect from the department and what we expect from you. Details of policies and procedures will be found in the Volunteer and Work Experience Handbook, which will be issued to you.

We, Nature Plymouth, agree to the following:

- To introduce you to how the organisation works and your role in it, and to provide any training you need.
- To provide regular support and supervision so that you can discuss your interests, needs and tasks, and gain feedback from us.
- To respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.
- To pay agreed expenses incurred during your voluntary assignments.
- To consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- To provide adequate insurance cover while you undertake tasks approved and authorised by the department.
- To provide a safe environment for you to complete voluntary tasks in accordance with our Health and Safety Policy.
- To apply our Equality and Diversity Policy.
- To try to resolve, fairly, any problems, grievances and difficulties you may have while volunteering with us.
- To terminate your services as a volunteer with reasonable notice and explanation.

As a Volunteer I agree to the following:

- To perform my volunteering role to the best of my ability.
- To follow the department's procedures and standards, including Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity and confidentiality in relation to staff, service users and other volunteers.
- To attend volunteer induction training and any other training if required to carry out the voluntary tasks I have agreed to.
- To meet time commitments and standards agreed to, and to give as much notice as possible whenever I cannot work when expected.
- To bring to the attention of my manager any problems or concerns I encounter during my voluntary work so they can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved between the relevant parties.
- To inform the Service of any relevant change in my personal circumstances which could affect my voluntary role. These may include changes to my health or any changes in terms of my criminal record.
- To give reasonable notice should I wish to terminate my services as a Volunteer.

Note: This agreement is in honour only and as is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment