

CHAGFARM POLICY ON VOLUNTEERING



Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Chagford Community Farm and forms the foundation for volunteering management practice. Its purpose is to ensure fairness, consistency and legal compliance in management and support for volunteers.

1. Relevance and accessibility

1.1 This policy is of relevance to all current and potential volunteers, as well as to every member of staff concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers or promoting voluntary activity within Chagford Community Farm.

1.2 The content of this policy is made readily accessible to current and potential volunteers electronically through the volunteering pages of the Community Farms website with printed copies also available at each volunteer day.

1.3 All new Chagford Community Farm staff are informed about this policy as part of their induction process and made aware of the vital importance of volunteers to the organisation.

2. Values and commitment

3.1 The voluntary and membership principles on which Chagford Community Farm was founded is one of its greatest strengths and our commitment to people and places will continue to be expressed through active partnerships with individuals, local groups and communities. We aim to provide positive and fulfilling volunteering opportunities that seek to satisfy individuals' motivations, aspirations and fulfilment. The shared objective is to widen understanding of and encourage active participation in organic food production.

3. Defining volunteers and Chagford Community Farm's relationship with them

3.1 A volunteer is someone who, without any expectation of financial compensation willingly gives their time, skills and/or experience to perform a task at the request of and on behalf of Chagford Community Farm. In line with relevant legislation and case law, Chagford Community Farm distinguishes volunteering from employment, and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

3.2 The importance of maintaining a balanced, effective and mutually beneficial staff/volunteer partnership is essential. It is based on the principle that Chagford Community Farm staff provide the structure, organisation, direction and day-to-day management together with appropriate levels of accountability, while volunteers add value to our work by performing a wide range of roles, contributing their time, flexibility, experience and specialist skills.

3.3 The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, will be imposed on volunteers to attend, give a minimum amount of time or carry out the tasks provided. Likewise the Farm cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or any other benefit for any activity undertaken.

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3.4 Although volunteers offer time freely, willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what the Farm expects from volunteers and what volunteers expect from the Farm - as well as maintaining the high standards on which the Farm reputation depends.

4. Range of Volunteering opportunities

On the land itself Chagford Community Farm broadly offers two types of volunteering opportunities.

4.1 One off volunteer days - these will be advertised in advance around a specific task on farm (for instance fencing, collecting wood for the rayburn, digging drainage ditches, building repairs etc). On these days food will normally be provided (there may be a small cost for the food). Volunteers are expected to bring their own boots and wet weather gear, and any tools that might be useful (though the farm does have some tools if people do not have any). The aim of these days is partly work related and partly social, with an opportunity to meet other members and find out about the farm.

4.2 Regular volunteering – this opportunity is aimed at people who can commit to regular days of work. This might be weekly, fortnightly or monthly. They will be provided with tools, but expected to bring boots and wet weather gear. The work done on these days will fit it with them demands of the farm, but is likely to include a degree of harvesting and weeding. While the Farm can be flexible about timing it is essential that these days are arranged in advance with the Farm Manager, the Farm is not able to consider volunteers arriving without prior planning.

4.3 In addition to working on the Farm there are a number of volunteering opportunities for people who have specific skills and would like to offer their services to the farm. Examples of this might be; IT, marketing, engineering/ machinery, ecology surveys, conservation. These opportunities should be discussed with the volunteer co-ordinator.

5. Guidance and Support

At each volunteering day there will be a member of Chagford Community Farm staff or volunteer co-ordinator present to guide and advise them in their tasks.

6. Commitment to diversity and equality (See Equal Opportunities policy)

6.1 Chagford Community Farm recognises the importance of encouraging diversity and achieving equality among volunteers, as well as employees, members and visitors. Volunteers are actively encouraged from a wide cross-section of backgrounds and experiences.

6.2 Chagford Community Farm values and respects the individual by providing equal opportunities to all for active involvement within the scope of the organisation's needs and resources. The Farm is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all - regardless of age (subject to 6.4 and 6.5), race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender, marital or parental status, religion, political beliefs or socio-economic background.

Acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role will be made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out the specified task(s) subject to the needs and restrictions of the location. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for a volunteer with a disability in accordance with the Farm's Access Policy.

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6.3 All staff, volunteers, contractors and partner organisations are expected actively to support Chagford Community Farm's commitment to diversity and equality.

6.4 There is no minimum age requirement for volunteers provided they are undertaking suitable tasks for which there is no legal minimum, they are supervised and not left alone and a parent or guardian has given permission if they are under 18. All newly recruited managers of young volunteers are DBS checked (previously CRB).

6.5 Chagford Community Farm does not specify a general volunteer upper age limit and recognises the contribution made by older volunteers in terms of valuable knowledge and experience. However, the Farm would be irresponsible if it permitted volunteers to continue beyond a point where volunteering is detrimental to their own or other people's health and safety.

7. Volunteer recruitment and selection

7.1 Chagford Community Farm has a fair and consistent process for recruiting and selecting volunteers that is relevant and appropriate to each role.

7.2 Chagford Community Farm recruits volunteers on a needs-led but mutually beneficial basis to match desirable projects and activities with volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience and motivation. The underlying principle to recruitment is the opportunity for a needed task to be undertaken in ways which will provide identifiable benefits to motivate the potential volunteer. Managers will also discuss individual volunteer requirements to ensure volunteers feel happy and properly supported in their role throughout their time as a volunteer.

7.3 Usually anyone being considered for a volunteer role will be invited for an informal interview with the manager to explore their skills, experience, interests and suitability, as well as their motivation. Reasonable adjustments may be made to recruitment methods to suit the particular access requirements of applicants with disabilities.

8. Induction, training and development

8.1 New volunteers will be made to feel welcome and provided with an informal induction. This will include a copy of the Volunteer Welcome Pack, containing essential information for all volunteers, together with material relevant to the specific location, role or group.

8.2 At the end of a mutually suitable settling-in period, an informal discussion will be held between the volunteer and manager to record positive experiences as well as discuss any areas of concern.

8.3 Training and support for volunteers is a high priority for Chagford Community Farm in order to provide the necessary information and skills to carry out the role. Volunteers will be asked to attend training to meet relevant needs, such as induction and health & safety.

8.4 The Farm recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and the opportunity for progression and personal development. Volunteers may want to develop new skills while helping the Farm and, where appropriate, will be encouraged to take on new roles or assume greater involvement.

8.5 A volunteer may act as a trainer, supervisor, leader or project manager, providing this is properly specified and it has been established that the volunteer has the necessary skills or potential.

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9. Support and recognition

All staff and volunteers responsible for volunteer management are encouraged to ensure appropriate acknowledgment on a regular basis. This could range from a simple 'thank you' after every attendance, to a planned social event for volunteers.

10. Communication

10.1 It is recommended Community Farm practice that managers discuss progress with their volunteers on a regular basis. This will give the opportunity to monitor the contribution from the role, establish whether the volunteer would like to change their current contribution and ensure that they feel valued and satisfied with their volunteering.

10.2 The Farm recognises that volunteers are free to end their involvement at any time. Managers are encouraged to hold an exit interview to find out why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether the volunteer may want to be involved again in the future.

11. Problem solving

11.1 Chagford Community Farm aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. Clear procedures are in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers. Managers are responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints. They will seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for a positive and amicable solution.

11.2 In the unlikely event that a problem is not felt to have been responded to volunteers can discuss the issue with Chagford Community Farm board.

12. Health and safety

The Community is committed to providing and maintaining a safe environment, without risks to health, for all its volunteers. The Farm will provide appropriate instruction, training and supervision to ensure the health, safety and welfare of volunteers. The Farm's written Health and Safety Statement and other relevant guidance is available at volunteer days and on the farm site.

13. Insurance

13.1 There is no Chagfarm insurance in force to cover loss or damage to equipment, including vehicles, provided for the use of volunteers. Volunteer's equipment and vehicles are stored and used on the farm at the Volunteers risk.

13.2 The Farm's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

13.3 Due to our scale there is no personal accident insurance in force for the benefit of volunteers.

13.4 The Farm does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage.

13.5 If volunteers use their professional skills at the Farm's request for purposes on which they are qualified to advise, the Farm will issue a letter on request releasing them from professional indemnity.