

# Volunteer Policy

## 1 Introduction

NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) defines volunteering as – “Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual....

This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals.”

From Turning Tides’ small beginnings of the first Soup Run, to our first Hostel, to our Community Hubs, volunteers have been at the heart of our charity, driving the community response to homelessness.

- 1.1 Volunteering at Turning Tides is like a partnership. A volunteer gives generously of their time and skills and we aim to make their volunteering experience rewarding and fulfilling. Our volunteers will meet new people, volunteer in a friendly environment and know that they are truly making a difference to the lives of the clients that we support.
- 1.2 For a true partnership to evolve and develop it is necessary that the volunteer understands the importance of the commitment they are undertaking and equally that we do not make any unrealistic demands of them. The purpose of this policy is to provide practical information and a clear framework of what a volunteer can expect from their volunteering experience, how they will be supported and what Turning Tides’ expectations are from them.

## 2 Scope

The policy applies to all volunteers of Turning Tides.

## 3 Related Documents

**Equality and Diversity Policy**  
**Volunteer’s Charter**  
**Health and Safety guidelines for Volunteers**  
**Professional Boundaries Policy**  
**Confidentiality Policy**  
**DPA and Data Management Policy**  
**Volunteer Handbook**  
**Volunteer Induction Checklist**

## 4 Policy

### 4.1 **Who are our Volunteers**

Turning Tides’ Volunteers come from all walks of life and all backgrounds; they are members of our local communities including clients of Turning Tides’ and provide vital community engagement and support to the organisation.

Turning Tides prides itself on being inclusive and is committed to making volunteering with the organisation as accessible as possible.

### Supported Volunteering

Turning Tides has signed up to the Disability Action Alliance Charter. This means that the organisation offers accessible opportunities to those who have a disability or learning difficulty and where possible will make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of the individual. Turning Tides have linked up with WorkAid and are able to offer supported volunteering.

### Client Volunteers

Turning Tides recognises the positive impact that volunteering can have on an individual's self-esteem and mental health. Volunteering is also an opportunity to share skills as well as developing new skills. Turning Tides offers volunteering opportunities to all clients, including those that are currently accessing our services.

### Work Experience and Educational Volunteering

Turning Tides welcomes Students to complete their work experience and educational volunteering with the organisation. Turning Tides have a separate Work Experience and Educational Volunteering Information Form that students must complete prior to any volunteering commencing. The form includes parental/ guardian consent. If the volunteering is being organised through a college or school, then they will be invited to complete a risk assessment prior to volunteering commencing.

Students will be placed in a role agreed with the Volunteer Team / Project. Due to age restrictions, (see 5.8) roles and opportunities may be limited.

## **4.2 What we offer Volunteers**

Turning Tides places great value upon its volunteers. Volunteers are crucial to the smooth running of many of our services and without the hard work and commitment of these volunteers, our services would undoubtedly suffer and some would not run at all. We are seeking to push the boundaries of traditional volunteering. Our volunteering ethos is inclusivity, progression and enjoyment. We offer numerous clear and defined volunteering roles but also seek to find other more person centred roles whereby we can tailor a person's specific skill set to a required role or create a new role from that specific skill set. We also offer the opportunity to gain experience in a number of roles from client facing roles such as mentoring and befriending, to helping at our Community Hubs, to food preparation, office administration and warehouse opportunities.

Each new volunteer will be given a handbook as a reference to support them with their role. The handbook will include a role description, which sets out the purpose of the role, and the main duties associated with it. Role descriptions are not designed to be an exhaustive list of every task or scenario; however, they should give the volunteer a clear idea of what they can expect. The volunteer should check that they understand their role description and query anything they are unsure of. If a volunteer feels they have been asked to do something which is outside the remit of their role, they should not hesitate to seek advice from the Volunteer Manager or Co-ordinator. The Volunteer Team will not re-issue any policies or procedures if they are updated, however all volunteers will be made aware of any updates and may request a copy of updated policies, should they wish to.

## **4.3 Volunteer Application and Induction**

All volunteers will go through the same recruitment and induction process and will follow the same volunteer charter and procedures. To register an interest in volunteering, a Volunteer Information Form must be completed. This will indicate to the Volunteer Team the interests and availability of the potential volunteer. The form also requires information for two character referees. References are taken up upon receipt of the information form. Once references are returned, the Volunteer Team will arrange an induction meeting.

The induction meeting takes place prior to a volunteer starting and usually lasts around an hour, we hold group inductions and can welcome up to 4 new potential volunteers at each induction. The induction is a chance for the potential volunteer to meet the Volunteer Team, to find out more about Turning Tides, the types of volunteering roles on offer and to discuss all the practical information needed prior to getting started. A vital part of the induction is that the potential volunteer is shown and can demonstrate their understanding of the Turning Tides' Professional Boundaries Policy and Confidentiality Policy and indeed signs up to it. At the end of the induction, arrangements will be made for a trial session and follow up information/ key contacts will be passed onto the volunteer.

#### **4.4 Support and Monitoring**

It is vital to Turning Tides that our volunteers feel supported in their roles. Support is necessary so that volunteers are able to get the most out of their experience.

Volunteers can access support via the Volunteer Manager or Volunteer Coordinator, who are available via telephone, e-mail or in person.

Normally the support will be delivered by the Volunteer Team and through multiple forms. This could include -

##### Volunteer newsletters and updates

Every month our Volunteer Team will send out a volunteer update. This will include news and events from the charity.

##### Volunteer Team Facebook Group

Turning Tides has a closed Facebook Group for volunteers to join if they so wish. The purpose of this group is to create an online community for Turning Tides' Volunteers as well as providing a further platform for the Volunteer Team to communicate with our volunteers.

##### Support accessed as required

Volunteers can access support via the Volunteer Manager or Volunteer Coordinator, who are available via telephone, email at any time during working hours.

Volunteers can also request a time to meet and have a face-to-face meeting with a member of the volunteer team.

Volunteers are also encourage to speak to their Project Manager, as they too are responsible for supporting them day to day in their role.

##### Regular support sessions and supervision

Depending on the role that the volunteer is undertaking, it may be recommended by the Volunteer Team that the volunteer receive regular supervision. This will be mutually agreed and would consist of regular agreed meetings to identify and deal with any role related queries.

##### Other support offered by Turning Tides

Volunteers can choose to have an annual check in meeting with a Turning Tides Trustee or Volunteer Manager. This will be a face to face meeting, the purpose of this meeting would be to check that the volunteer is happy in their role. Comments and suggestions from this meeting will be fed back to the Volunteer Team.

Volunteers are invited to an annual meeting. This is an opportunity to receive updates from across the organisation, meet other volunteers and includes a Q&A with the Senior Management Team, Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees.

### Volunteer Wellbeing

Turning Tides have a duty of care towards our volunteers. The Volunteer Manager will liaise with service managers and staff, obtaining feedback and listening to any concerns. It is important to Turning Tides that whilst we enable volunteers the opportunity to be as engaged with the charity as they wish, that we do not allow the volunteer to become so engaged that we place unrealistic demands on them.

Similarly, we never want our volunteers to feel under pressure to commit to any amount of volunteering with us. If at any time a volunteer feels like they would like to alter their role or the hours they are volunteering, they should speak to the Volunteer Team.

If the Volunteer Manager or any of the service managers have a concern about a volunteer, including their health or wellbeing, then it is within their duty to check in with the volunteer and if necessary, ask that the volunteer takes a short break or reduces their volunteering.

## **4.5 Training**

Turning Tides have a full training programme that supports their volunteering roles. Each role description will include a breakdown of any training that Turning Tides feel would be beneficial to the role.

All volunteers will receive full training in how to carry out their roles by the staff member on duty and in certain cases by other volunteers. Volunteers can expect to be given a tour of the project they are supporting and have their attention drawn to key health and safety matters during their first session.

Volunteers must attend mandatory professional boundaries training every three years. All volunteers who handle food, or undertake other duties inside kitchens such as cleaning, must complete food safety training every three years. Turning Tides reserves the right to request volunteers complete additional mandatory training courses relevant to their roles if deemed necessary. Turning Tides will endeavour to make this mandatory training as convenient as possible for the volunteer. For classroom training a range of times and dates will be offered and for online training we will offer the option of the course being completed during their normal volunteering hours.

Non-compulsory training will be offered on an ad-hoc basis. This will either be in house or from an external provider. Priority will be given to volunteers where the training course is most relevant to their roles. Volunteers should note that non-compulsory training is normally delivered during normal office hours.

## **4.6 References**

Turning Tides understands that for many, volunteering can be a route into paid employment or can help improve a job or college application. If a volunteer wishes Turning Tides to provide a reference, they should direct all enquiries to the volunteer team. The Volunteering Team will confirm the placement and provide start and end dates as a minimum.

Once a volunteer has completed over 100 hours of volunteering with Turning Tides the volunteer team may be able to give more information, this would be completed at the request of the volunteer.

Please note, we are only able to provide references for active volunteers, or for 6 months after a volunteer has left Turning Tides.

#### **4.7 Data Protection**

As a volunteer, you have exactly the same rights as a member of staff when it comes to data protection legislation.

#### **4.8 Insurance Cover**

Volunteers are covered by our Employers and Public Liability Insurance.

#### **4.9 Lone Working**

If a volunteer is expected to undertake any lone working, this will be explained at the outset and full guidance will be given. Volunteers are covered by Turning Tides Lone Working Policy in the same way as staff members. Lone worker training will be provided prior to any lone working taking place and personal safety advice will be given.

#### **4.10 Communication**

Volunteers will receive a generic volunteer update every month, which will inform them about all Turning Tides' news and events, this will come directly from the Volunteer Team via email. There will be hard copies available to all.

There are volunteer forums held throughout the year to keep volunteers engaged and informed. All volunteers will be invited to these events, attendance is voluntary.

As well as the above forums Turning Tides hosts an Annual Volunteer Meeting, more information regarding this can be found under section 4.3.

### **5 Procedure**

#### **5.1 Complaints**

If a volunteer has a complaint about their duties or conditions, they should raise the matter with the Duty Manager or their Project Manager. If the volunteer is not satisfied, the complaint can be taken to the Volunteer Manager. Similarly, if a member of staff has a complaint about a volunteer they should initially discuss the matter with the Project Manager and Volunteer Manager. If it is not resolved, it should be taken to the HR Manager and/or Chief Executive.

#### **5.2 Statements to the Press and Media**

Our PR & Fundraising Manager handles all press enquiries, please do not make statements, which involve Turning Tides, its policies, or about the people we support to the press or the media on behalf of Turning Tides, this includes all social media platforms and community pages.

If you would like any further guidance then please ask the Volunteer Team, a full copy of Turning Tides Social Media Policy is available upon request.

#### **5.3 Confidentiality**

All volunteers must undertake to maintain confidentiality at all times. A full Turning Tides Confidentiality Policy is available on request and all volunteers are expected to adhere to this.

#### 5.4 Signing in and out

Some services will operate a sign in and sign out process. All volunteers are asked to sign in at the beginning of their shift and sign out at the end of their shift. This registration ensures that the project manager knows who is in the building if it becomes necessary to evacuate it, as the register can be used as a roll call. It is also useful to keep as a record to track volunteering hours.

#### 5.5 Payment of Expenses

Turning Tides are committed to ensuring that volunteering is accessible to all. The reimbursement of out of pocket expenses such as travel costs can be discussed with the volunteer and mutually agreed.

#### 5.6 Dress Code/ Personal Belongings

Volunteers should wear what they are going to be comfortable in and what is appropriate for their role. All volunteers are required to be aware of their appearance and dress suitably for carrying out their duties.

##### Clothing

Casual, comfortable clothing is acceptable.

Revealing clothing such as short skirts and low cut tops are not acceptable. Turning Tides reserves the right to insist that employees, volunteers and visitors do not wear badges, logos or clothing that may cause offence or that promotes alcohol or drug use. Guidance on acceptable clothing will be given at the volunteer induction.

Volunteers who are attending fundraising events may be asked to wear Turning Tides branded clothing, which will be provided by the Fundraising Department.

If in any doubt, volunteers are encouraged to ask the Volunteer Team or another staff member on duty for further clarification.

Footwear should be appropriate to carry out the volunteer's full range of duties.

##### Personal Belongings

Volunteers are advised that they bring any personal belongings with them at their own risk. Whilst we make every effort to keep items such as coats and handbags in a safe place, Turning Tides can accept no liability for any personal items that are lost or stolen. We therefore recommend volunteers only bring items which they will need during the course of, or directly before or after their volunteering duty.

#### 5.7 Age Restrictions

Turning Tides prides itself on being inclusive but recognise that due to the vulnerability of our client group we have to have a minimum age of volunteering which is 16 years. Volunteers who are aged 16 -18 will need to be supervised at all times. All other volunteering roles have no age restriction so long as the volunteer is physically able to carry out their volunteering duties.