



FreeUKGenealogy

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Introduction

Free UK Gen is volunteer-led, with a small staff of five to support their work. As of January 2017, we have around 6500 active volunteers working across the three projects. The roles they undertake range from transcribing to coordinating teams, to overall management. We also benefit from core volunteers that supplement areas of work including design, income generation (e.g. AdSense), and social media.

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Free UK Gen. It is of relevance to all within the organisation including volunteers, staff, members, and those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility. This policy is endorsed by The Trustees and will be reviewed periodically, to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of Free UK Gen and its volunteers.

Our Commitment

Free UK Gen recognises that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit users of services, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves.

Free UK Gen values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and which develop volunteering.

Free UK Gen recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Definition

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship as well as an important component of democracy. Volunteers are people who are unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the community.

Statement of values and principles

Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by Free UK Gen and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers.

Volunteers will not be used during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise the organisation cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, 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.

Volunteer Coordination

All volunteers will have a nominated Point of Contact (member of staff or volunteer) to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out tasks effectively. Volunteers will be informed of who to contact to receive support and supervision. The Executive Director has overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within Free UK Gen. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers.

Recruitment & Selection

Free UK Gen is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups including children. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned will be disregarded by the organisation in terms of recruitment and selection.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the organisation or referred to an appropriate volunteering service.

Volunteers will have a clear and concise role description, which will be reviewed periodically. The role description will be prepared in conjunction with the volunteer and their Point of Contact.

New volunteers will be properly inducted into the organisation.

Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence.

Training & Development

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all the organisation's [relevant policies](#), including those relating to volunteering, health & safety, and equal opportunities.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the organisation in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the volunteer's Point of Contact to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend/complete relevant training.

Training in the supervision of volunteers will be provided for all those who have direct responsibility for volunteers.

Support, Supervision and Recognition

Volunteers will have a Point of Contact to whom they can take their volunteering concerns and seek guidance and support.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and the supervisor to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be negotiated between the volunteer and their Point of Contact.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation's wider staff, at staff meetings etc.

Expenses

Free UK Gen's volunteers can claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure. What can be reclaimed from the organisation and the calculation of expenses is explained in the [Volunteer Expenses policy](#). The organisation has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses which are the same for volunteers, staff, etc. and are as approved by the Inland Revenue.

Insurance

The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. The organisation does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

Confidentiality

Free UK Gen's [Privacy Notice](#) covers all aspects of Confidentiality and Data Protection.

Settling Differences

See Free UK Gen's [Code of Conduct](#).

Free UK Gen aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The organisation seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences. The Executive Director is responsible for handling problems regarding complaints or conduct and these should be referred to him/her. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by the organisation to the volunteer while it endeavours to resolve the problem in an informal manner. If an informal resolution proves impossible, the organisation's wider grievance or complaints policies and procedures (which include volunteers) will be referred to. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role, or to leave the organisation.

Rights and Responsibilities

The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- have adequate support in their volunteering
- receive appreciation
- volunteer in a safe environment
- be insured
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- receive appropriate training
- be free from discrimination
- be offered the opportunity for personal development

The organisation expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- comply with the organisation's policies

Policies

- [Privacy Notice](#)
- [Equal Opportunities Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Risk Assessment](#)
- [Volunteer Expenses](#)