



VOLUNTEER CHARTER

Becoming a Charter Champion

A guide for those who influence
decisions about volunteering

Volunteer
Scotland



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This guide is for anybody who has influence over decisions which affect volunteering, including local and national policy makers, elected representatives, Trade Union representatives, senior leaders in public services and funders.

What is the Volunteer Charter?

The Volunteer Charter sets out ten key principles which help to ensure that volunteers are engaged in rewarding, appropriate and sustainable roles. It helps to ensure that volunteers have quality volunteering experiences with adequate support and training, and protects against the engagement of volunteers to replace or undermine paid roles.





The 10 Volunteer Charter Principles

This Charter sets out the 10 key principles for assuring legitimacy and preventing exploitation of workers and volunteers.



1

Any volunteer activity is a freely made choice of the individual

If there is any compulsion, threat of sanctions or force, then any such activity is not volunteering.



2

Volunteers should receive no financial reward for their time however out of pocket expenses should be covered

No one should be prevented from volunteering due to their income.

*See additional guidance for this principle on the [Appendix](#) page.



3

Effective structures should be put in place to support, train and develop volunteers

This also includes collaboration with paid workers.



4

Volunteers and paid workers should be able to carry out their duties in safe, secure and healthy environments

Free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence and discrimination.



5

Volunteers should not carry out duties formerly carried out by paid workers

Nor should they be used to disguise the effects of non-filled vacancies or cuts in services.



6

Volunteers should not be used instead of paid workers or undercut their pay and conditions of service

Nor undertake the work of paid workers during industrial disputes.



7

Volunteers should not be used to reduce contract costs

Nor be a replacement for paid workers in competitive tenders or procurement processes.



8

**Volunteers should not be used
to bypass minimum wage legislation**

Nor generate profit for owners.



9

Volunteers and paid workers should be given the opportunity to contribute to the development and monitoring of volunteering policies and procedures

Including the need for policies that resolve any issues or conflicts that may arise.



10

Volunteer roles should be designed and negotiated around the needs and interests of volunteers, involving organisations and wider stakeholders

Finding legitimacy and avoiding exploitation through consensus depends on mutual trust and respect.

What can I do to support the Volunteer Charter?

As somebody who has influence over decisions which affect volunteering, your pledge to uphold and promote the Volunteer Charter can have a real impact on the experiences of volunteers, volunteer management professionals and paid staff working alongside volunteers.

Ensure adequate resource

You can use your influence to ensure that volunteering activity is adequately and sustainably resourced. This could include dedicated funding for paid volunteer management, as well as funds for volunteer training, ongoing support and out of pocket expenses which reflect the approved mileage allowance payment (AMAP) rate. It could also include implementing sustainable multi-year funding which recognises the time required for volunteers to make a meaningful impact.

Prevent job substitution

You can pledge to ensure that strategic decisions which change how a service is delivered do not result in volunteers replacing the roles or tasks of paid staff. This is particularly likely where services are facing funding cuts, or where there are staff shortages. In such challenging circumstances, volunteers should never be the solution.

Meaningful engagement

Before making decisions where volunteering is part of the delivery model, take time to consult with relevant organisations to ensure that plans are realistic and sustainable. Volunteer Scotland are always available to provide guidance on this, or we can signpost to other relevant agencies.

What is expected of me if I become a Charter Champion?

We will invite you to have a discussion with a representative from Volunteer Scotland to identify how you might be able to promote the Volunteer Charter in your role.

We would also expect you to read and understand the principles of the Volunteer Charter, and to actively consider it when making decisions.

Your pledge will last for 3 years. We will then contact you to find out how you have upheld the principles of the Charter, and invite you to re-pledge.

What is in it for me?

Being a Charter Champion will indicate to your volunteers, stakeholders, members or constituents that you are committed to the principles of the Volunteer Charter.

If you pledge your support for the Volunteer Charter, you or your organisation's name will feature on a list of Charter Champions on our website.

You will also be provided with a digital badge that you can use to publicly advertise your support of the Volunteer Charter on your website, volunteer publications or social media for as long as you are a Charter Champion.



Let's work together to protect and ensure a positive experience for all workers and volunteers. Pledge your support for the Volunteer Charter today.

**Pledge support for the
Volunteer Charter here**

Appendix

Additional guidance on principle 2

Volunteers should receive no financial reward for their time however out of pocket expenses should be covered. No one should be prevented from volunteering due to their income.

Whilst volunteers should normally be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering, we understand that there may be legitimate or underlying reasons why this is not possible.

For example, small volunteer-led organisations may operate with very limited financial resource, and likely recruit volunteers primarily from the local community. There are also certain roles where expenses are inappropriate due to the more informal nature of the role. Finally, we recognise the challenges many organisations face in accessing financial resource for their volunteering programmes, particularly in the current financial climate.

If you do not reimburse expenses for a legitimate reason, this does not necessarily mean you are undermining the principles of the Charter. However, we would invite you to consider if reimbursing expenses might make your volunteering opportunities more inclusive. You can find more information about this [here](#).

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