

OUR CHARTIST HERITAGE

Registered Charity Number: 1176673

Volunteering Policy

Introduction

Our Chartist Heritage (OCH) is a small grass-roots charity. We recognise that the strength and success of our organisation are driven by the diversity, commitment and creativity of our volunteer workforce. OCH is committed to formalising and developing a policy and organisational framework for volunteering in 2022, as a step towards registering for the Pre-assessment and Assessment Investing Route to the Investing in Volunteers Award in early 2023. This policy represents the first stage of that process

It sets out the principles and practice by which OCH will involve volunteers and is relevant to staff, volunteers and trustees within the organisation. It aims to create a common understanding of volunteering and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management and support of volunteers.

The Volunteer Handbook* will provide further detail about the support and procedures in place for volunteers.

Our commitments

- OCH supports volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, members of the general public who engage with our work and the volunteers themselves.
- OCH will ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that paid staff (employees and/or freelance consultants whom OCH may engage from time to time) are clear about the role of volunteers and will foster good working relationships between such paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will not be used to replace staff.
- OCH recognises that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure that adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteers
- OCH will offer a flexible range of opportunities for volunteering and will encourage a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as young people, people with a disability, older people and people from ethnically diverse communities.
- OCH promotes and defends Article 21 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirms the right of all to participate in the government of their country and participate in civic life. Flowing from this, OCH recognises that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in various ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively, so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all parties.

What does OCH mean by 'volunteers' and what is 'volunteering'?

The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) defines volunteering as an activity that:

- Is undertaken freely, by choice
- Is undertaken to be of public/community benefit
- Is not undertaken for financial gain

In line with this, OCH defines volunteers as individuals who undertake activity (volunteering) on behalf of OCH, unpaid and of their own free choice.

Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering and are not covered by this policy.

Trustees are volunteers, with responsibility for governance of OCH.

Volunteers may be involved in a one-off, short-term or on a long-term regular basis. They may be involved:

- in the direct delivery of OCH's events and activities
- on the Board of Trustees, the Education Committee, the Convention Committee, or the Newport Rising Festival Committee
- in community engagement to raise awareness of and engagement in our work
- in promotional and fundraising activities

OCH values volunteers for:

- bringing additional and diverse and new skills and perspectives to OCH
- enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- championing our cause within the wider community
- enhancing the quality of our work and the experience of participants in our events and activities
- promoting the well-being of participants in our events and activities, staff, other volunteers, local communities and themselves.

Standards of good practice

Our volunteer management practice is informed by the Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard. OCH is committed to achieving the award of Investing in Volunteers by March 2024.

The six quality areas that comprise the six standards of the Investing in Volunteers Award are:

- Vision for volunteering
- Planning for volunteers
- Volunteer inclusion
- Recruiting and welcoming volunteers
- Supporting volunteers
- Valuing and developing volunteers

Roles and responsibilities

The Volunteer Co-ordinator is responsible for the development, management and co-ordination of voluntary activity within OCH, including volunteering policies and procedures and the welfare of volunteers.

All volunteers will have a designated person for guidance, support and supervision. Staff/volunteer job/role descriptions will explicitly refer to responsibilities for volunteers.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks

or for the organisation to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

There is, however, a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what OCH expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of OCH.

OCH expects volunteers to:

- be reliable and honest
- uphold OCH's values and comply with its policies
- make the most of opportunities given eg for training, mentoring
- contribute positively to the aims of OCH and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

Volunteers can expect OCH to:

- provide clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- provide adequate support and training relevant to their role
- provide insurance cover for volunteering activity and ensure it takes place in a safe environment
- treat volunteers with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- pay out-of-pocket expenses
- provide opportunities for personal development
- recognise and appreciate volunteers
- recognise the right of volunteers to say 'no' to anything they consider unrealistic or unreasonable
- ensure volunteers know what to do if something goes wrong

Recruitment and selection

Equal opportunities principles will apply in the recruitment of volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted, in both English and Welsh and in other languages as appropriate, so as to attract interest from different sectors of the community.

Positive action to target recruitment may be used where appropriate. Online application is encouraged but non-digital methods of application are also available.

OCH will make available to those enquiring information about volunteering including written role descriptions that set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required and benefits. A risk assessment will be undertaken on all volunteer roles and identified risks and steps to mitigate risks will be shared with the volunteer.

Recruitment will usually involve an informal interview, application form and the taking of references; the process will be defined and consistent for any given role – for example the recruitment process for trustees, regular volunteers and one-off events will be tailored in each case and may differ from one another.

Where applicants are not able to be placed in their preferred role, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles or signposted to the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations website <http://www.gavo.org.uk> or the <http://www.volunteering-wales.net> website.

For roles that involve caregiving and/or sustained and direct contact with young people or adults in a regulated service or activity, volunteers will be required to have a full DBS

disclosure check which will be arranged by OCH. DBS disclosures are dealt with in the strictest confidence. A criminal record is not necessarily a bar to volunteering

Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken

Support and supervision

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate and this is discussed during induction. Arrangements vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken, and may include telephone support, group meetings or one-one reviews.

Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with OCH for example via team meetings, planning events, focus groups and/or volunteer surveys. Formal recognition of the contributions is expressed in annual reports, website articles, social media posts and at the OCH AGM.

Dealing with problems

OCH aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard and noted and acted upon promptly.

OCH will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in case of difficulty. Where informal resolution is not possible, OCH's Volunteer Complaints Policy* will be invoked. Volunteers will be made aware of OCH's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviours by volunteers will be addressed by OCH.

Expenses

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim. Volunteers will receive out-of-pocket expenses incurred by their volunteering activities.

Moving on

When volunteers move on from OCH, they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully.

Volunteers who have remained with OCH for at least three months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

Other relevant documents

*The Volunteer Handbook will be produced in 2023 as will the Volunteer Complaints Policy

Other organisational policies of relevance to volunteers include Health and Safety Policy and Guidance; Equality and Diversity; and Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Reviewed and approved on 25 April 2023