

South Oxford Community Association

Volunteering Policy

Policy Statement:

- South Oxford Community Centre relies on volunteers for many aspects of provision.
- The Centre welcomes volunteers from the immediate community of Cold Harbour, New Hinksey and Grandpont, as well as from further parts of the City and beyond.
- Volunteers make a vital contribution to the management, finance and maintenance of the Centre, as well as the provision of groups, events and activities.
- Volunteering is key to providing a community hub right at the centre of South Oxford, in Hinksey Park. The Centre appreciates and celebrates all our volunteers.

This policy sets out the ways in which people can contribute to the work of the Community Centre and how the Centre looks after those who give their time and expertise to the Centre and local community

Volunteering opportunities at the Centre

SOCA actively welcomes and encourages volunteers. Volunteers may be members of the Association or they may come from the wider community. There are various ways in which volunteers help at the Community Centre:

- Assisting at events such as Art Weeks or the Community Café
- Gardening
- Decorating or DIY
- Delivering newsletters and publicity flyers for events
- Spring cleaning
- Organising a community event at the Centre
- Organising a regular group of activity at the Centre
- Assisting a partner organisation or hirer with an activity or group e.g. South Oxford WI, Farmers Market, Swap Shop
- Using specialist knowledge to speak at an event or contribute to specific issues

All volunteers will:

- receive a warm, friendly welcome from staff and Trustees
- If coming to the Centre with a proposal will be given time at a Management Meeting if appropriate to explain their idea, activity or project
- receive an appropriate degree of training (i.e. talking the work through with someone). This will include an introduction to the various policies and procedures for the safe running of the Centre and time to read and discuss them with a member of staff or Trustee
- regular volunteers helping in the SOCA run events (e.g. Art Weeks, Community Café) will receive a written outline of their role and be allocated a member of the team to support them and report to for the duration of their involvement
- be invited to join the Community Association (there is a small fee involved)
- be invited to SOCA run special events and the Annual General Meeting
- be invited to give feedback at the end of their involvement with SOCA

Management Committee

South Oxford Community Centre is a charity (Number: 304351) and is constituted as a Community Association. The Centre is overseen by a Management Committee whose members are the Trustees of the South Oxford Community Association. The Trustees are all volunteers and must be members of the Association.

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Anyone expressing an interest in volunteering to become a new member of the Management Committee will be invited to attend a monthly committee meeting as an observer and be given as much information as possible about the Association.

Management Committee members (Trustees) are elected annually at the Community Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in accordance with the constitution. The Trustees must manage the Community Association in accordance with the Constitution and will need to declare suitability once elected. Their name will go forward to the Charity Commission who will ensure that they are suitable to manage the affairs of a charity.

The Management Committee work together as a team to run the Association and each have an equal vote if decisions come to a vote after discussion. The Chair will have a deciding vote, but this will be rarely, if ever, used. There are some specific Officer roles on the Committee such as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and details of their roles and responsibilities can be found in the Constitution and within the guides available on the Charity Commission website.

All the Trustees have an equal duty to understand their responsibilities and should be familiar with the Charity Commission booklet '*The Essential Trustee – What You Need To Know*'. The Management Committee has an induction programme for new trustees to include:

- access to the Constitution
- copies of policy documents
- minutes of previous meetings
- the accounts and budget.

An experienced member of the committee will be assigned to any new Trustee to act as a mentor and ensure that the current business is fully explained.

Duties and Responsibilities

In summary the Management Committee members as Trustees must:

- ensure that the Association complies with charity law and the requirements of the Charity Commission and complies with any other laws affecting the activities of the Association e.g., Health & Safety and Employment legislation.
- be familiar with the rules and objects of the Constitution and abide by them.
- act with integrity and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets. Where Trustees are required to make a decision that affects the personal interests of one of the Trustees (e.g. where a Trustee may have a skill that could be employed for a specific purpose): that Trustee must declare their interest, may need to be absent for some parts of the discussion and will not be allowed to vote.
- ensure that the charity is and will remain solvent by keeping informed of the Association's activities and financial position.
- use funds wisely, and only to further the purposes and interests of the Association
- avoid undertaking activities that might place the Association's property, funds, assets or reputation at undue risk and take special care when investing funds.
- exercise reasonable care and skill as trustees, using personal knowledge and experience to ensure that the Association is well-run and efficient.
- get external professional advice on all matters where there may be material risk to the Association, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties.

To fulfil these responsibilities properly, members of the Management Committee should make sure that they keep up to date with what the Association is doing. In practice this means attending regular Management Committee meetings.

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Personal Liability of Trustees

Good management of the Association is essential: SOCA is an unincorporated charity and Management Committee members could be held personally and individually responsible in theory if the Association incurs debts and losses however if members have acted in good faith, worked within the constitution and taken appropriate professional advice where necessary they will be protected by Clause 20 of the constitution and by insurance.

Volunteer Expenses (including Trustees)

Volunteers are not paid for the work they do and make a gift of their valuable time: they are not expected to give their money too.

Volunteers should always be reimbursed for expenses they incur working for SOCA and **a culture of not claiming genuine expenses should not be encouraged** as it could deter people on a low income from volunteering.

These expenses might include:

- cost of childcare where necessary to attend meetings
- travel expenses
- postage and telephone costs if working from home
- Costs of ingredients if baking or cooking for the Centre events

These expenses must be reasonable and as much as possible agreed in advance when the volunteer role is being set up and agreed. Receipts will be required, and refunds signed for.

Most volunteer expenses will be managed directly by the Administrator at the Centre.

Trustees / Volunteers may occasionally spend their own money on behalf of the Association: for instance, making purchases online for equipment or doing the shopping for an event. These are not, strictly speaking, expenses and will:

- be agreed in advance
- single item of expenditure over £30.00 needs to be authorised by the Committee
- reimbursed only on production of a receipt

Behaviour and conduct

All volunteers (and staff team) are expected to:

- be courteous and considerate to others working with them, to visitors and clients using the Centre
- to report any instances of difficult, abusive or threatening behaviour from others
- to report any suspicious behaviour or anything they observe that may be a health or safety issue to either themselves or others
- make sure they are aware of emergency procedures and exits
- Observe current COVID19 restrictions and safety measures

If the behaviour of a volunteer is considered to be inappropriate by staff, Centre users or Committee, it should be reported immediately to the Administrator who may, with the agreement of an Officer of the management committee, ask the volunteer to leave the building immediately or cease their volunteer role. A range of alternative actions may be applied; a quiet word may be sufficient, but further steps will follow the staff disciplinary process. If the volunteer is a member of the Community Association, the procedures set out in the Constitution may be invoked and this may lead to suspension of membership.

Further information

The Charity Commission guide:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

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Community Matters: www.communitymatters.org.uk,

This policy was adopted by Committee on 23rd March 2009; reviewed on 8 June 2015; reviewed on 14th September 2016; reviewed 11th July 2018, reviewed May 2021

Signed by Chair: Bob Price...Date: 19th May 2021