



GREEN SHELTER SOCIETY UK

Volunteer Policy

Document control

Field	Details
Organisation	Green Shelter Society UK
Charity registration number	1192803
Policy owner	Board of Trustees
Operational lead	Volunteer Coordinator or nominated trustee
Version	1.0
Approval status	Board approved
Effective date	4 th September 2026
Next review	12 months from approval, and after a serious incident or significant change to volunteering activities
Applies to	Trustees, staff and workers who manage volunteers, volunteer applicants and all volunteers representing Green Shelter Society UK

Approval requirement The Board of Trustees must approve this policy, confirm the responsible lead and complete the approval record before it is presented as an approved policy.

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1 Policy statement

Green Shelter Society UK values the time, knowledge and experience contributed by volunteers. We aim to provide volunteering opportunities that are purposeful, inclusive, appropriately supported and safe for volunteers, participants and the wider public.

We will give volunteers clear information about their role, reasonable induction and supervision, access to relevant policies, and a fair way to raise concerns. Volunteers are expected to act within their role, follow agreed safeguards and treat everyone with dignity and respect.

2 Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Green Shelter Society UK recruits, supports and manages volunteers involved in seed banks, seed and plant swaps, gardening projects, public events, workshops, school and place-of-worship projects, visits, nature trips, administration, fundraising, communications and other charitable activity.

It applies to regular, occasional, remote and event volunteers, including trustees when they are undertaking a separate volunteer role. It should be read with the role description, the Volunteer Code of Conduct and any activity-specific risk assessment or procedure.

3 Volunteering relationship and principles

Volunteering is freely undertaken and unpaid, except for reimbursement of authorised out-of-pocket expenses depending on prior agreement. A volunteer is not an employee or worker merely because they volunteer, and the Volunteer Agreement is intended to describe mutual hopes and arrangements rather than create a contract of employment or an obligation to provide or perform work.

- Volunteers may decline a task or stop volunteering. We ask for reasonable notice where possible so activities can be managed safely.
- GSSUK does not guarantee a minimum amount or continuing supply of volunteering work.
- Roles should be designed around the charity's needs, the volunteer's suitability and any reasonable support that can be provided.
- Volunteers must not replace paid work in a way that is exploitative or misleading.
- Trustees will ensure that any payment, benefit or requirement does not unintentionally change the legal nature of the relationship.

4 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Trustees	Approves this policy, oversees significant volunteering risks, ensures proportionate resources and insurance, and receives reports on serious concerns or incidents.
Volunteer Coordinator	Coordinates recruitment, role descriptions, induction, support, records, expenses and routine concerns, and refers safeguarding, safety or governance matters to the appropriate lead.
Project or event lead	Briefs and supervises volunteers, confirms risk controls and emergency arrangements, allocates suitable tasks and reports concerns, incidents or changes.
Safeguarding Lead	Advises on safer recruitment, boundaries, concerns, allegations, referrals and DBS eligibility in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.
Volunteers	Follow the role description, Code of Conduct, policies, instructions and risk controls; work within competence; protect information; and report concerns promptly.

5 Volunteer roles and recruitment

Each recurring role should have a proportionate written role description. It should identify the purpose, usual activities, location, support contact, anticipated time commitment, expenses, training, relevant risks, boundaries and any suitability checks. It must not be written as an employment contract or require fixed work in return for reward.

Recruitment will be proportionate to the role and may include an application or expression of interest, an informal discussion, references, confirmation of identity, relevant qualifications or licences, and safeguarding or criminal-record checks where lawful and appropriate.

- Applicants will receive enough information to decide whether the role is suitable.
- Selection decisions will relate to the role, safety, conduct, capability and the support GSSUK can reasonably provide.
- Conflicts of interest, close relationships or previous concerns will be managed openly and fairly.
- Unsuccessful applicants will be treated respectfully and their information retained only as set out in the Privacy Policy.

- Volunteers under 18 require an age-appropriate role, risk assessment, supervision and parent or carer arrangements appropriate to the activity and venue.

6 Suitability checks safeguarding and DBS

GSSUK will assess the checks required for each role. References, identity checks, discussion of relevant experience and gaps, and role-specific competence checks may be used. A criminal record does not automatically prevent volunteering; any information will be considered fairly, confidentially and in relation to the role and risk.

A Basic, Standard, Enhanced or barred-list DBS check will be requested only where the role, law and DBS eligibility rules permit the relevant level. DBS checks are one part of safer recruitment and do not replace references, supervision, training, boundaries or risk assessment. Where GSSUK uses DBS information, it will follow the DBS Code of Practice and maintain appropriate arrangements for handling criminal-offence data and recruiting people with convictions.

Any duty to refer a person to the Disclosure and Barring Service, the police, a local authority or another regulator will be considered under the Safeguarding Policy and applicable law. Volunteers must not begin unsupervised duties that require completion of checks until authorised.

7 Induction training and trial periods

Before or at the start of a role, GSSUK will provide a proportionate induction covering the charity, the role, supervision, boundaries, safeguarding, equality, health and safety, emergency arrangements, confidentiality, data protection, expenses and how to report concerns. Volunteers must complete mandatory or role-specific training before undertaking restricted tasks.

A supported introductory or trial period may be used to confirm that the role works for both parties. It is not an employment probation period. The role, support or placement may be adjusted or ended if it is unsuitable or cannot be delivered safely.

8 Supervision support and wellbeing

Each volunteer will know who provides day-to-day support and who to contact if that person is unavailable. The level of supervision will reflect the activity, the volunteer's experience and the needs of participants. Volunteers should ask for help when instructions are unclear or a task exceeds their competence, confidence or physical ability.

- Provide reasonable opportunities for feedback and check-ins.
- Respond to signs of stress, bullying, harassment, unsafe workload or difficult experiences.
- Offer debriefing after serious or distressing incidents where appropriate.
- Avoid lone working where the assessment requires another person and follow the relevant contact or check-in procedure.
- Keep professional boundaries and do not expect volunteers to provide personal care, counselling, transport, home visits or specialist advice unless the role and safeguards expressly permit it.

9 Standards of conduct and boundaries

All volunteers must follow Appendix A. Volunteers represent GSSUK only when authorised and must not make commitments, enter contracts, collect money, access personal information, drive participants, post through official accounts or speak to the media unless their role permits it.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation, retaliation, theft, deliberate unsafe conduct and serious misuse of information or charity resources are not acceptable. Concerns

will be considered promptly and fairly under the relevant safeguarding, complaints or conduct process.

10 Health safety and incident reporting

GSSUK will plan volunteering activities in accordance with its Health and Safety Policy, risk assessments, venue arrangements and emergency procedures. Volunteers must receive relevant safety information, use equipment only when trained and authorised, wear identified protective equipment and stop or report work they reasonably believe is unsafe.

- Report hazards, defective equipment, accidents, injuries, near misses, violence, threats and environmental incidents promptly.
- Do not use powered machinery, chemicals, ladders, vehicles or specialist equipment unless the role assessment and training allow it.
- Follow hygiene and allergen controls where food, compost, soil, seeds, plants or shared equipment are handled.
- Tell the appropriate lead, in confidence, about a health condition or support need that may materially affect safe participation.
- Follow the site's first aid, fire, severe-weather, missing-person and evacuation arrangements.

11 Equality inclusion and reasonable adjustments

GSSUK aims to provide fair access to volunteering and will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. We will consider reasonable adjustments and practical support for disabled volunteers and seek to reduce barriers connected with language, caring responsibilities, finances, digital access and other circumstances.

An adjustment may be limited where it would fundamentally alter the role, create an unmanageable safety risk or impose a disproportionate burden, but alternatives should be explored and the decision recorded. Volunteers may raise concerns under the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy or Complaints Procedure.

12 Confidentiality data protection and records

Volunteer records will be collected, used, shared, stored and deleted in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Policy and the applicable retention schedule. Access will be limited to people who need the information for recruitment, support, safety, safeguarding, administration or legal obligations.

Volunteers must protect personal, sensitive and confidential information obtained through their role, use only approved systems and recipients, avoid discussing cases in public, and report suspected loss, unauthorised disclosure or cyber incident immediately. Confidentiality continues after volunteering ends, subject to lawful disclosures such as reporting a safeguarding concern or crime.

13 Expenses equipment and benefits

Volunteers are unpaid. GSSUK may reimburse reasonable, necessary and authorised out-of-pocket expenses within its available budget and depending on prior agreement. The role description or current expenses arrangements should state eligible costs, approval limits, evidence required, claim deadlines and the person who authorises payment.

- Obtain approval before unusual, high-value or overnight costs are incurred.
- Submit receipts or other acceptable evidence unless an agreed exception applies.

- Expenses may include agreed travel, postage, telephone costs, protective clothing, equipment or access support genuinely required for the role.
- GSSUK will consider accessible arrangements for volunteers who cannot reasonably pay significant approved costs in advance.
- Gifts, discounts, honoraria, allowances or other benefits must not be offered or accepted without trustee approval and consideration of tax, benefits and employment-status implications.

Equipment remains GSSUK property unless agreed otherwise. Volunteers must use it responsibly, report loss or damage, protect accounts and passwords, and return items and records when requested or when volunteering ends.

14 Insurance and use of vehicles

Trustees will check that insurance appropriately covers volunteers and the activities they perform, including public liability and any other cover relevant to the charity's arrangements. Volunteers must disclose material information requested for insurance and comply with policy conditions and role restrictions.

A volunteer using a personal vehicle for charity activity is responsible for holding the correct driving licence, roadworthy vehicle, tax, MOT where required and insurance that permits the journey. GSSUK must approve any role involving transport of participants, and additional safeguarding, accessibility, driver, vehicle and journey controls may apply. No volunteer may use a charity or hired vehicle unless specifically authorised.

15 Photography social media and public communications

Volunteers must follow GSSUK's photography, social media and digital-safety arrangements. They must use approved consent and notice processes, respect refusals, avoid identifying or privately contacting children or adults at risk outside authorised arrangements, and store or share images only through approved systems.

Only authorised representatives may speak on behalf of GSSUK, operate official accounts or publish statements using the charity's name or logo. Personal opinions must not be presented as GSSUK positions, and confidential information must never be posted online.

16 Concerns complaints and whistleblowing

A volunteer should normally raise a concern with their supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator. Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately under the Safeguarding Policy, and urgent danger should be reported to the emergency services. A concern about a senior person, serious wrongdoing or retaliation may be raised through the Complaints and Whistleblowing Procedure or directly with the Chair or another uninvolved trustee.

GSSUK will listen, keep information as confidential as reasonably possible, avoid retaliation against a person who raises a genuine concern, and explain the route and outcome so far as it is appropriate and lawful to do so. Volunteers may also contact a relevant regulator, local authority or the police where appropriate.

17 Managing difficulties and ending volunteering

Where a difficulty arises, GSSUK will normally discuss the concern, hear the volunteer's response, identify support or improvement where appropriate and confirm the next step. The process will be proportionate and is not an employee disciplinary or grievance procedure.

GSSUK may change, pause or end a role because of conduct, safety, safeguarding, suitability, capability, funding, organisational change or the needs of the activity. Immediate suspension or ending may be necessary where there is a serious risk or allegation. The volunteer may also leave at any time; reasonable notice is appreciated but not required.

On leaving, access rights must be removed and charity property, funds, information and records returned or securely disposed of as instructed. Relevant records may be retained in accordance with the Privacy Policy, safeguarding requirements and legal obligations.

18 Recognition references and intellectual property

GSSUK may recognise volunteer contributions through thanks, feedback, learning opportunities or agreed events. Recognition must not amount to wages or a contractual reward. Any reference will be honest, proportionate and normally limited to confirmed role information and documented experience.

Ownership and permitted use of photographs, written materials, designs, databases or other work created in a volunteer role should be agreed where relevant. Volunteers must respect third-party copyright, licences, confidentiality and GSSUK branding.

19 Monitoring governance and review

The Volunteer Coordinator will keep proportionate records and report themes to trustees, including recruitment, participation, training, expenses, accidents, safeguarding matters, complaints, equality concerns and reasons for volunteers leaving. Reports should protect privacy and identify improvements rather than disclose unnecessary personal information.

Trustees will review this policy at least annually and after a serious incident, significant complaint, legal change or material change in activity. Role descriptions, checks, training, insurance and risk assessments will be reviewed when roles or circumstances change.

20 Volunteer contacts

Volunteer Coordinator or nominated trustee	Name: Nehlin Sayed Email: admin@greenshelter.org.uk Telephone: +44 7412 153708
Safeguarding Lead	Name: Iqbal Hussain Email: info@greenshelter.org.uk Telephone: +447725986852
Health and Safety Lead	Name: Muddassir Syed Email: info@greenshelter.org.uk Telephone: +44 7799 662830
Chair or uninvolved trustee for escalations	Name: MS Rahman Contact route: Phone +44 7450214564

21 Trustee approval

The Board of Trustees confirms that it has reviewed this policy, appointed the responsible contacts, checked the insurance and expenses arrangements, and approved the associated Code of Conduct and Volunteer Agreement.

Approval record	Details
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Approved by	Board of Trustees
Date approved	04 th September 2026
Chair name and signature	MS Rahman, MS RAHMAN
Effective date	04 th September 2026
Next review date	04 th September 2027

Appendix A Volunteer Code of Conduct

Everyone volunteering for Green Shelter Society UK agrees to the following standards while representing the charity.

I will

- Treat every person with dignity, fairness and respect and support an inclusive environment.
- Follow my role description, training, risk assessments, policies and reasonable instructions.
- Work within my competence, ask for help and report hazards, accidents, safeguarding concerns and misconduct promptly.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid favouritism, sexual or exploitative behaviour, abuse of trust and unauthorised private contact.
- Protect confidential and personal information, use approved systems and report any suspected breach.
- Use charity money, equipment, premises, accounts, seeds, plants and other resources responsibly and only for authorised purposes.
- Declare actual or potential conflicts of interest and gifts or benefits connected with my role.
- Respect consent and GSSUK rules when taking or sharing photographs, recordings or stories.
- Act honestly and avoid behaviour that could reasonably endanger people or seriously damage trust in the charity.

I will not

- Discriminate, bully, harass, intimidate, exploit, abuse or retaliate against another person.
- Work while impaired by alcohol, illegal drugs or misuse of medication, or possess prohibited substances during an activity.
- Give medical, legal, financial, safeguarding or specialist advice beyond my role and competence.
- Use unauthorised transport, tools, machinery, chemicals, payment systems, databases or social-media accounts.
- Promise confidentiality where information must be shared to protect someone or comply with law.
- Accept personal money, loans or significant gifts from a beneficiary, or create a financial relationship, without prior written authorisation.

A suspected breach will be considered fairly and proportionately. Serious or repeated breaches may result in restrictions, suspension, referral to an authority or the end of volunteering.

Appendix B Volunteer Agreement

This agreement records the practical understanding between Green Shelter Society UK and the volunteer. It is not intended to create an employment contract, worker relationship, mutual obligation or entitlement to paid work. Either party may end the arrangement at any time.

Agreement field	Details
Volunteer name	
Role title and project	
Usual location	
Start date	
Supervisor or support contact	
Anticipated availability	Flexible indication only
Approved expenses	Depending on prior agreement
Required induction training and checks	
Relevant adjustments or support agreed	Record only what is necessary

Volunteer agreement acknowledgements

Green Shelter Society UK hopes to

- Provide a clear role description, induction, relevant information, training, supervision and a named support contact.
- Provide a safe and respectful environment, consider reasonable adjustments and respond to concerns.
- Reimburse agreed expenses in accordance with the charity's arrangements and available budget.
- Protect volunteer information and maintain insurance appropriate to the authorised activities.

The volunteer hopes to

- Carry out agreed activities with reasonable care and tell the supervisor when they are unavailable or need support.
- Follow the Volunteer Policy, Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Privacy Policy and role-specific procedures.
- Protect confidential information and return charity property and records when asked or on leaving.
- Raise safeguarding, safety, conduct or data concerns promptly through the appropriate route.

Acknowledgement	Record
Volunteer signature and date	
GSSUK representative signature and date	
Review date if appropriate	

Appendix C Volunteer Role Description Checklist

Complete the relevant fields before advertising or assigning a recurring role. Keep requirements proportionate and distinguish essential conditions from preferences.

Item	Information to record
Role identity	Role title, project, purpose, location and responsible supervisor.
Activities and limits	Usual tasks, decisions permitted, prohibited activities and when approval is required.
Time and flexibility	Indicative pattern or event date, flexibility, notice arrangements and expected duration without creating guaranteed hours.
People and setting	Who the volunteer will work with, level of public contact, children or adults at risk, home visits, lone working or online contact.
Skills and suitability	Essential capability, physical requirements, experience, language, licence or qualification, with reasonable adjustments considered.
Checks	Application, discussion, references, identity, DBS eligibility and level, driving or qualification checks, and when clearance is required.
Training and supervision	Induction, mandatory training, task demonstrations, supervision level, check-ins and escalation contact.
Safety and equipment	Risk assessment, protective equipment, tools, travel, first aid, emergency and incident-reporting arrangements.
Information and communications	Systems, data access, confidentiality, photography, media, fundraising or financial permissions.
Expenses and insurance	Eligible expenses, approval route, claim evidence, insurance restrictions and vehicle requirements.
Review	Role owner, approval date, review date and triggers for earlier review.

Appendix D Related policies and guidance

Green Shelter Society UK documents

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy and relevant activity risk assessments;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Complaints and Whistleblowing Procedure;
- Privacy, Data Protection and Records Retention arrangements;
- Photography, Social Media and Digital Safety arrangements; and any recruitment, disciplinary, grievance or reasonable-adjustment procedures that apply.

External guidance

- Charity Commission guidance on managing charity volunteers;
- Charity Commission safeguarding guidance for charities and trustees;
- Disclosure and Barring Service eligibility guidance and Code of Practice;
- Health and Safety Executive guidance for voluntary organisations;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018; and
- Equality Act 2010.

Trustees should check current official guidance and obtain appropriate professional advice where a role raises unusual employment-status, safeguarding, insurance, tax, immigration, equality or data-protection issues.