



Volunteers' Policy

Introduction

This policy explains the principles of voluntary involvement with SASS. This policy is endorsed by the Committee and will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of SASS and its' volunteers.

Who is this policy for?

This policy covers volunteers and potential volunteers. This policy will guide the work of those entrusted by the Committee to recruit, support and supervise volunteers on their behalf.

What is volunteering?

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

Why does SASS involve volunteers?

We are a volunteer-led organisation and without volunteers we would not function! A strong, diverse volunteer base helps SASS develop new activities and services in ways that are responsive to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

Volunteering is a way of actively involving asylum seekers, refugees and locals in joint work.

Volunteering:

- Builds people's skills and confidence, and can support volunteers' futures – e.g. through providing references; evidence of skills and commitment.
- Builds respect, understanding and good relationships between “locals” and those seeking sanctuary.
- Helps the organisation to be sustainable as we survive on small grants.
- Promotes diversity and team working.

Scope of Volunteering at SASS

Informal volunteering

Many people offer informal volunteering by coming to our drop-ins and helping out. They contribute by chatting to newcomers, setting up for the drop-in, helping in the kitchen, cleaning and tidying up afterwards and sharing information.

Specified volunteer jobs

In addition, SASS has volunteers who undertake specific roles. These can be occasional or regular volunteering activities.

For example:

- Offering language support
- Looking after the door
- Signposting
- Running activities – e.g. craft, music,

Responsibilities of SASS towards volunteers

SASS values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate roles and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and which develop volunteering and the volunteers themselves. SASS acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit members, staff, the local communities and the volunteers themselves.

SASS recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively. It is important to us that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is used well to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

Volunteer Co-ordination

The person with the overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within the organisation is the Volunteer Development Worker. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers. The Volunteer Development Worker reports to the Committee, and is supervised by a nominated Committee Member.

The Volunteer Development Worker will offer guidance and advice to help volunteers carry out their tasks. If volunteers have any questions they should ask the Volunteer Development Worker, and in their absence they should ask a member of the Committee.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

Volunteers give their time to SASS and the relationship is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise that can be imposed on volunteers to attend or give a minimum amount of time to carry out their voluntary activity. Likewise the organisation cannot be compelled to provide either regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Although volunteers offer their time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability.

Recruitment and Selection

SASS is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all. Recruitment to a volunteer role is made on merit, and volunteers will be selected based on their suitability to carry out the agreed tasks.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted so that they are accessible to all members of the community.

All potential volunteers will be invited to attend an informal chat where the Volunteer Development Worker will explain the volunteering opportunities and ask questions to ascertain the potential volunteer's suitability for the tasks. New volunteers will be properly inducted into the organisation, which will include information on the sorts of tasks they will undertake and any relevant policies.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with SASS or be referred to SCVS.

Commitment to Diversity

SASS is committed to the promotion of equality, dignity and diversity in all its work. The organisation is committed to including asylum seekers and refugees in the running of the organisation. SASS will ensure that all its practices, activities and projects are inclusive. All committee members and volunteers will have equal access to opportunities depending on their individual ability and aspirations.

Safeguarding and Screening

All potential volunteers will be invited to attend an informal chat. Volunteers will be asked to produce one reference. SASS is required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if the position involves working with children or providing language support.

Volunteers who work in the drop-in will be supervised.

Volunteer development

All volunteers will be made aware of, and have access to, all of the organisation's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health and safety, safeguarding and equal opportunities. Training will be offered where it is relevant to the role.

Support, Supervision and Recognition

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.

The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be agreed between the volunteer and the Volunteer Development Worker, and will be dependent on the type of volunteer role.

If a volunteer has any concerns or wants guidance and support, they should go to the Volunteer Development Worker.

Expenses

SASS recognises that the reimbursement of expenses incurred in travelling to and from the place of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. The organisation will reimburse reasonable travel expenses or out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure, in line with HMRC guidance.

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

SASS will advise the volunteer of its confidentiality policy and procedures during Induction.

Settling differences (Discipline)

SASS will make sure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly. The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences and problem solving.

Where there are concerns about a volunteer's behaviour or conduct SASS will follow its Settling Differences Procedure.

Initially, the Volunteer Development Worker is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct. 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.

Informal or oral stage

The Volunteer Development Worker will meet with the volunteer and discuss their concerns. The volunteer may be accompanied by a friend. The VDW may adjourn the meeting to gather more information. Mitigating circumstances can be discussed at the meeting. Careful notes will be taken, and a time frame for improvement will be agreed.

Written warnings

If there is insufficient improvement, or in the case of a very serious offence, a further meeting should be arranged. The volunteer may be accompanied by a friend. After the meeting a written warning clearly stating what further improvements are expected should be issued to the volunteer.

Dismissal

If there has been no improvement at the conclusion of the previous stages or in the case of gross misconduct, the volunteer can be asked to leave and any further offer of help from them refused. This must be put in writing to the volunteer within two weeks, giving reasons and details of the right of appeal.

In this case, an appeal must be received within 14 days of the effective date of the letter of dismissal. The volunteer will not be allowed to continue giving help pending his/her appeal.

Opportunity to appeal

The volunteer has the right to appeal. The volunteer may be accompanied by a friend. A member of the Committee will hear the appeal. The Volunteer Development Worker will attend the meeting to present the management case. The Committee member will make their decision, which will be confirmed in writing within one week and their decision will be final.

Problem solving (Grievance)

Where the volunteer has a complaint they should follow the following procedure:

Stage 1: Oral complaint

Initial complaints, whether concerning a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, should first be discussed informally. Many issues can be solved this way.

Complaints should be raised with your Volunteer Development Worker. If the complaint concerns this person, you should talk to the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Stage 2: Written complaint

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, you should make a formal complaint in writing to the Volunteer Development Worker, or if the complaint is about this person, then to the Vice-Chair of the Committee. SASS will look into the complaint, and will aim to respond to your complaint within two weeks.

Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, then you are able to appeal to the Chair of the Committee.

You will have the option to be accompanied to the meeting by a person of your choice. The Chair will respond within two weeks and their decision will be final.

Rights and Responsibilities

The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- have adequate support and supervision in their volunteering
- receive appreciation
- have safe working conditions and be insured whilst volunteering
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses, on production of receipts
- receive appropriate training
- be free from discrimination
- be offered the opportunity for personal development relating to their volunteer role

The organisation expects volunteers to:

- be reliable, respectful to others and to be honest
- be on time
- respect confidentiality
- attend training and supervision sessions
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects and supports the aims and values of SASS
- work within agreed guidelines and boundaries
- respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- comply with the organisation's policies and procedures

Declaration

I, _____ have read the above mentioned volunteering policies and commit to abide by them.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

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