Countryside Management Service

VOLUNTEER POLICY

This policy presents the commitment of the Countryside Management Service (CMS) to working with volunteers, and is applicable to all roles.
The main aims of this policy are:

- To describe the role of volunteers within CMS and outline expectations for both staff and volunteers.
- To ensure staff appreciate the value of volunteers.
- To ensure volunteers feel valued and supported.

The policy will be available to all CMS volunteers and staff, and can be found on the volunteer notice boards at CMS offices and on the CMS website.
It will be reviewed annually by volunteers and staff.

About CMS

The CMS works with communities, local councils, private landowners and other partners across Hertfordshire to enable them to care for and enjoy their environment.

CMS does this by:

- Encouraging people to get involved in looking after their local countryside or park by offering a range of voluntary opportunities, from practical conservation to leading Health Walks.
- Providing advice to landowners and managers to help them look after their land with wildlife in mind. Helping a range of people secure funding for landscape improvement and conservation work.
- Promoting outdoor recreation through organising events and working with groups to develop walk and cycle routes to link towns and villages to their surrounding countryside.

CMS is hosted and funded in part by Hertfordshire County Council, and further funded by the majority of Hertfordshire's District and Borough Councils.

How volunteers help CMS achieve its aims

Volunteers are an integral part of CMS activity, with many projects such as Health Walks sustained predominantly by volunteers. The time, experience, knowledge and skills that volunteers offer in support of CMS's work is highly valued by staff. It is CMS's aim that volunteers gain satisfaction from their time working with us and that the relationship is one of mutual benefit.

What volunteers can expect from CMS

At CMS we are committed to encouraging and supporting all volunteers and will do this by:

- providing volunteers with a nominated member of staff to serve as a main point of contact and support.
- talking to volunteers about their role and providing appropriate training, guidance and support depending on the abilities and interests of the individual and of CMS.
- always considering the health, safety and well being of volunteers.
- requesting feedback from volunteers and giving feedback on their work.
- ensuring volunteers feel valued and thanked for their contribution.

What CMS expects from volunteers

- To be good ambassadors for CMS and positive role models to other volunteers.
- To behave in a responsible and professional manner and adhere to CMS policies and procedures whilst working on behalf of CMS and its sponsors.
- To talk to us and ask for help if it is needed.
- To never undertake a task that they are uncomfortable doing, or are not trained or capable of doing.

Volunteer induction

Volunteers will receive an induction that is appropriate to their role, the details of which can be found in the relevant Role Description. On the rare occasion that it is decided that we are unable to offer a volunteering opportunity, other organisations may be suggested that are deemed more appropriate. Volunteers will be asked to supply any relevant personal information such as related experience or any medical conditions which may impact upon the type of work offered.

Voluntary Roles

There are a range of voluntary opportunities available with CMS across the County, the details of which can be found in the various Role Description documents. These cover the activities undertaken, and the support and benefits available. They can be found on the CMS website, on the volunteer notice boards at the offices, or on request. Volunteers are welcome to take on one or a combination of these roles.

(Individuals who are claiming benefit should discuss their voluntary activities with their local Benefits Office.)

Moving on

We understand that personal circumstances change. If a volunteer no longer wishes to continue in their role at any point, they are not obliged to do so. On leaving CMS, volunteers are welcome to ask for a reference or statement of their achievements. To help us continue to improve our services we may ask volunteers for feedback on their experience.

Equalities and Diversity

At CMS we recognise, value and welcome the fresh ideas and differing perspectives of our diverse volunteer workforce and will work to encourage the highest levels of accessibility, openness, honesty, dignity and respect across the organisation.

People under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult on CMS voluntary activities. Those between 16 and 18 may attend activities unaccompanied with the consent of their parent or guardian.
The needs of vulnerable adults will be treated on a case-by-case basis. It is likely that we will require vulnerable adults to be accompanied by a carer until the carer, on agreement with CMS staff, deems it no longer necessary. This agreement will be confirmed in writing.

Insurance

Whilst engaged on agreed voluntary activities for CMS within the scope of this policy, all volunteers will be covered by Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Public Liability insurance. Those aged between 16 and 70 are also covered by HCC's Personal Accident Insurance.

Public Liability insurance covers you for claims made against you for negligence or carelessness towards others, including other volunteers.
Personal Accident insurance provides limited compensation, regardless of fault, to anyone who is injured while on a CMS project.
This cover applies only while volunteers are participating in agreed activities. HCC's insurance policies do not cover personal property against accidental loss, theft or damage.

Car insurance companies differ in the way they view voluntary activity (whether it is business or social use), and therefore all volunteers are advised to check that their policy covers them for traveling to and from CMS activities.

Health and Safety
All volunteer activities for CMS are risk assessed and appropriate actions are taken to reduce the risk of personal injury. However, volunteers must recognise that they are also responsible for their own health and safety and that of those around them.

Medical Conditions
If you have or have had any medical conditions, illness or injury that may affect you or others while working with us, or if there are any changes to your health that we should know about, please let us know. Where necessary we may refer you to our Occupational Health Practitioner for assessment. The information you provide is strictly confidential and will only be seen by the Occupational Health Unit.

Grievance procedures
If a volunteer has an issue they would like to discuss with someone they should feel comfortable approaching any member of staff in the knowledge that they will listen and endeavour to resolve the situation informally. If a volunteer is not content with this resolution, further investigation into the complaint will be made and a more formal meeting will be called.

Disciplinary procedures
CMS sets a high standard of behaviour for its staff and volunteers and does not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour. If a volunteer breeches the working practices outlined in this policy, they will be spoken to in private and asked to alter their behaviour. If they do not respond positively to requests to change their behaviour they will be asked to leave their role.
In the case of a serious act of misconduct (violence, theft, drug or alcohol abuse, harassment, non-compliance with a safety plan or risk assessments, etc.) they will be asked to leave immediately.

Confidentiality
Personal information relating to the volunteer is confidential. Records are available only to relevant staff and select volunteers for the effective management and development of volunteer services and are stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

LAST REVIEWED: November 2011
NEXT REVIEW DUE: November 2012