



Volunteering Policy

1) Introduction

Middlewich Heritage Trust recognises the significant and valuable role that volunteers have in creating, implementing and enhancing our services and believe that volunteering should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers. We intend to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement in our work.

For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who does voluntary work on our behalf, with voluntary work defined as:

“ Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment” (helping out Survey volunteering England 2007).

Within Middlewich Heritage Trust, volunteers serve on our management committee and help with the delivery of our services. Volunteers undertake supplementary and supportive tasks, complementing and not replacing the work of paid staff.

Middlewich Heritage Trust believes that our relationship with our volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which the Trust and our volunteers both have rights and responsibilities. We hope that volunteers will enjoy their involvement and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives. We expect staff at all levels to work positively with our volunteers and, where appropriate, actively seek to involve them in their work, complying with the procedures detailed below,

2) Purpose and Advantages of adopting a Volunteer Policy

This policy presents Middlewich Heritage Trust with a framework of best practice and procedures, which we will follow when recruiting, selecting, managing and supporting volunteers.

The policy will:

- recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and Middlewich Heritage Trust
- establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers
- give a framework for recruiting and supporting volunteers including people from underrepresented groups
- commit Middlewich Heritage Trust to identify and adequately meet the financial and personnel costs of the volunteer programme and to support volunteering through funding and other forms of help
- recognise the contribution all its volunteers make in a range of ways

3) General

In involving volunteers, we will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Volunteers receive specific role descriptions and volunteer agreements, ensuring they have clear expectations of their role.
- Volunteers have a named person as their main point of contact and are provided with regular supervision to consider progress and discuss any concerns.
- Training and support will be offered to volunteers

- We ensure that volunteers feel part of the organisational structure by enabling them to contribute to our on-going development by attending staff information sessions and events
- Information given to volunteers, and forms they are asked to complete, are clear and easy to understand
- Volunteers are reimbursed for out of pocket expenses
- Within resources currently available, Middlewich Heritage Trust will try to meet additional equipment or support needs to enable disabled people to participate fully as a volunteer.
- We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage; procedures are in place to deal with complaints either by or about volunteers
- We do not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and do not expect volunteers to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or roles
- All staff and volunteers are expected and required to follow our Equal Opportunities Policy and treat each other and all visitors with respect and fairness
- Our Health and Safety Policy cover volunteers, and we take care not to expose volunteers to risks to their health and safety, and that of others: volunteers will have a member of staff on site with them at all times
- There is no formal/legal agreement between Middlewich Heritage Trust and its volunteers. When volunteers give their time for a given number of hours, this is entirely at their discretion
- We will update our guidance in line with relevant changes in either law or in the scope of volunteer roles

4) Identifying Volunteering Opportunities

If a member of staff identifies a new voluntary opportunity, they should, discuss the proposal and its implications, in terms of resources and support, with their line manager. A Volunteer Role Description will then be drawn up by the member of staff, who will be the main contact for the new role.

a) Volunteer Role Description

Volunteer role descriptions ensure volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and will minimally include:

- The volunteer's role title
- A list of tasks and responsibilities
- Times/days and location of volunteering activity
- Skills/experience that are required/desired/essential
- Whether the role is anticipated to be short term or ongoing
- The person who will be their main contact

For some roles it may be possible for the volunteer to "build on" certain tasks once their confidence and experience has grown.

5) Recruitment

The recruitment process for volunteers will help establish whether potential volunteers and the Trust meet each other's interests and needs. The process will include an informal interview, an application form and taking up of references, and will be in line with Middlewich Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and current legislation.

We will use a variety of approaches to ensure we recruit volunteers that are representative of the community and the people who use our services.

6) Selection

The selection process for volunteers interested in volunteering for Middlewich Heritage Trust will include:

- attendance at an introduction session where they will learn about the Trusts work and be given specific information on the volunteer role/s
- completing a volunteer registration form with two referees
- an interview with the named supervisor with support if necessary, from a designated Trustee

References will be accepted from suitably qualified people, who do not need to have been former employers, but should not be close relatives. Two references are required, and no volunteer will commence a placement until both are received and are satisfactory. Any prospective volunteer, for whom this may prove a difficulty, should seek advice from the Heritage Development Officer.

Where a volunteer role requires a volunteer to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if the volunteer has completed one within the previous 3 calendar months, we will not ask them to complete a further check but will request to see the original notification.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to anyone who applies to be involved with our work and only relevant convictions will be taken into account when considering a prospective volunteer's application.

At any point in the selection process, if a potential volunteer is considered unsuitable for a role, Middlewich Heritage Trust will explain their reasons to that volunteer.

7) Induction

All volunteers will receive an induction, determined by the Heritage Development Officer or the named supervisor, which will be in keeping with the duration and nature of the volunteering activity.

All volunteers will have a named supervisor who shall be responsible for:

- Providing the volunteer with a written description of the volunteering role outlining specific and general tasks, responsibilities and who they will report to
- Ensuring that volunteers are aware of their agreed responsibilities with regards to confidentiality. Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff
- Organising a planned induction to the organisation, ensuring volunteers are aware of the Volunteers' Information File which contains policies, procedures and forms
- Ensuring volunteers have adequate workspace, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely.
- Arranging a short, trial period during which volunteers will receive training, support and feedback, including the chance for them to feedback their views and concerns. At the end of the trial, if it is decided that the volunteer is not best suited to the needs of the Trust an alternative voluntary role may be suggested and support will be given to find this. It is hoped that, if a volunteer considers a volunteer role does not fulfill their requirements, they feel able to withdraw their help without fear of embarrassment.
- Making up and maintaining a confidential file for the Volunteer. The file will be held in a secure manner in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The file should contain the application form, references, the volunteer agreement, induction record, record of the dates, times and activities undertaken, supervision record, training record and emergency contact details.
- Providing on-going support including one to one meeting on a regular basis

8) Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers will sign a Volunteer Agreement, which outlines the voluntary arrangement between the volunteer and Middlewich Heritage Trust. It will also be signed by the Heritage Development Officer who will be the designated supervisor for the volunteer. It is binding in honour only and is not

intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. This agreement is intended to be flexible enough to take account of changes in a Volunteer's circumstances or in the requirements of Middlewich Heritage Trust.

9) Volunteer Expenses

Middlewich Heritage Trust believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage, through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis, and is committed to meet, within resources available, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers.

These will include:

- Travel between home and place of volunteering activity. This includes public transport or a mileage allowance. If traveling by public transport, the ticket must be retained, by way of a receipt. If the volunteer is using his/her own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept.
- The mileage allowance paid will be concurrent with the general Trust staff mileage allowance. If a journey is in excess of 15 miles (round trip) volunteers are required to check the arrangements with the supervisor beforehand. Volunteers, claiming this allowance, must notify their motor insurance company and ensure their policy specifically includes "business use".
- Car parking charges. The car park ticket must be retained, by way of receipt.
- If volunteering longer than five hours in any one period, a subsistence allowance to a maximum of £3.50 will be paid. Receipts for items purchased must be retained

Claims for expenses should be made on a Volunteer Expenses Claim form and are paid retrospectively.

10) Problem solving

In any organisation, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that this will not be the case, if there are any concerns volunteers should in the first instance speak to their named supervisor, or one of the trustees who will try and resolve the matter informally.

If the matter remains unresolved, reference will be made to the Problem-Solving Procedure for volunteers, a copy of which is in the Volunteer's information File. All complaints will be dealt with within 10 working days and treated in a confidential manner.

Volunteers will not be subject to the Trust disciplinary procedures nor have access to Town Council grievance procedures, both of which are for employees only.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, their supervisor should investigate to find out what is happening. This includes talking with the volunteer concerned. If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer should be informed that s/he will be offered 'special guidance' for a period. The object of 'special guidance' will be to encourage improvement. If a volunteer does not meet our standards of performance or the steps, we have taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer will be offered more suitable voluntary activities. If behaviour, which in the Trust's view, is equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred, then the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately.

11) Ending Involvement

Although both Middlewich Heritage Trust and a volunteer can end their volunteering arrangement at any time and without any notice, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, the Trust will aim to give a volunteer at least 2 weeks notice, hoping that they will offer the same to us.

The decision to ask a volunteer to leave will be a last resort. It might not be possible to keep a volunteer, for reasons nothing to do with the person's performance, due to, for example, a project ending. It may be necessary ask a volunteer to leave due to, for example, poor performance, misconduct, attendance irregularities, DBS issues or criminal convictions.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the reasons for ending an involvement are clarified, recorded and shared with the volunteer. Where a specific volunteer role within the Trust has proved not to be suitable for a particular person, the Heritage Development Officer or a designated Trustee will assist them to explore other options.

At the end of a volunteer's time with Middlewich Heritage Trust their views and experiences will be captured in an exit questionnaire.

This will gather information on the following areas:

- Their "highs and lows" whilst volunteering with us
- Their views on the training and support they were offered or received during their time
- Feedback on how the volunteer performed

12) References

If asked, either during a volunteer's time with us or when it ends, we will supply a reference, based on a volunteer's service with Middlewich Heritage Trust, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

13) Insurance

Trust volunteers are covered by Middlewich Heritage Trust insurance policies.

Middlewich Heritage Trust is responsible for the actions of its employees / volunteers in the course of their duties and will take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimise accident, injury, loss or damage.

14) Monitoring and Review

It will be the responsibility of the Heritage Development Officer to ensure that the Volunteer Information File is in accordance with current legislation, best practice in relation to managing and supporting volunteers, and the Local Compact for Cheshire East.