



Volunteering Policy

We really value volunteers at Common Soil. The organisation started as a voluntary group of people coming together to grow food to agro ecological principles and we recognise that volunteers bring so much energy, enthusiasm, skill and creativity to Common Soil and that it wouldn't be the same without them. There are two ways to be engaged:

1. **Regular volunteering** - A regular volunteer is a person who gives their time and talent free of charge in a regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly slot, to work under the supervision of the Common Soil core team on defined tasks and to learn about sustainable food growing. Their involvement is to advance the mission of the organisation and regular volunteers make a commitment, are accountable to the organisation and are entitled to regular support and teaching offered by the Common Soil core team.

Regular volunteers are encouraged to become community members of Common Soil and can sign up without paying the regular monthly £3 membership fee. They will then hold a 'share' in Common Soil as an organisation. Regular volunteers can also have some veg from the harvest margins.

Regular volunteers can commit their time in line with the seasons and there are two options of regularity, which the volunteer is asked to choose at sign-up:

- **Weekly** – A weekly 3-hour/half-day shift April to Oct and then this can reduce to fortnightly in the winter if the volunteer prefers, or can continue weekly.
- **Fortnightly** – A fortnightly 3-hour/half-day shift April to Oct and then this can reduce to monthly in the winter if the volunteer prefers, or can continue fortnightly.

The times for regular volunteer shifts at Common Soil are:

Mondays 10am – 1pm

Wednesdays 10am – 4pm (3 hours within this)

A Thursday or Friday morning shift may also be possible by prior arrangement.

Having regular time slots means that volunteers have more people around to socialise with and that growers can plan tasks and offer support with them. Regular volunteering that is not at the field (e.g. administrative tasks) can be done outside of these times, in discussion with the Common Soil core team.

2. **Occasional volunteering** – An occasional volunteer is someone who responds to a call-out from Common Soil for support with a specific task on a specific date (e.g. weekend work days, community planting or digging sessions) or who approaches

Common Soil with an offer of support for a short time or task. Occasional volunteers do not receive the overall support and learning that regular volunteers do, but will be supported in the specific task they are engaging with.

All volunteers act with respect for the beneficiaries of the scheme and for the community. All volunteer involvement should mutually benefit the volunteer and the organisation.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

At Common Soil, we believe that volunteering should be accessible to all. Common Soil intends to ensure that equality of opportunity is afforded to all volunteers. No volunteers will be discriminated against or disadvantaged in the recruiting and retaining process, training or in the provisions of services, including (but not exclusively) on the grounds of age, gender, cultural or religious beliefs, different abilities, marital status, racial origins or sexual orientation, physical challenges, class, employment status or HIV status.

We endeavour to establish and maintain a positive working environment where no volunteer feels under threat or intimidated. Breaches of the policy will lead to a disciplinary investigation and possible disciplinary action. Please also refer to our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. More than that, we want all volunteers to feel welcome, relaxed and supported at Common Soil, so please do tell us what you would need in order to feel that way.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Volunteers are recruited directly by the Common Soil core team. Regular volunteering opportunities are advertised on the Common Soil website and in the email newsletters, in a way that is accessible to all members of the community. Occasional volunteering opportunities are advertised to the members of Common Soil through the email newsletter. Volunteering does not indicate any employment relationship has been created, either now nor an intention to in the future.

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Young people (under the age of 18 years) may volunteer at Common Soil:

- with a parent/guardian;
- by themselves under a recognised volunteer or work experience scheme, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme or Prospects work placements. All young people wishing to volunteer at Common Soil independently of their parent(s)/guardian(s), e.g. for their D. of E. award, will be asked to complete a form (which provides basic information that will be handled in accordance with data handling laws) including parental contact details. A parent/guardian of young people under the age of 16 years must give permission for their child to volunteer independently. Young people who are aged 16 or 17 years are asked to discuss their volunteering with a parent/guardian and state that a parent/guardian is supportive of their plans. See also Common Soil Safeguarding policy.

VULNERABLE ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Vulnerable adults wishing to volunteer at Common Soil are very welcome to and will be supported by Common Soil staff who have received safeguarding training. If the individual has significant support needs they will need to attend with a carer/support worker.

SELECTION PROCESS

Common Soil can only support a limited number of regular volunteers. For regular volunteering roles that require a level of commitment a selection process ensures that all prospective volunteers are invited for an informal chat with the Common Soil growers and a trial work day on the Common Soil site. This gives the opportunity to explore whether volunteers' time, availability and skills match the requirements of Common Soil and whether they will achieve what they want to out of volunteering.

Provided that the growers consider the prospective volunteer to have the necessary skills for the area of work they are interested in, and the volunteer wishes to work with Common Soil, a volunteer agreement will be made. When it is considered that we cannot offer a volunteer a suitable role at Common Soil, the prospective volunteer will be informed.

For occasional volunteering roles for specific tasks that are advertised only to the existing members of Common Soil, the task is allocated to the first person/people who declare/s themselves able to complete the task according to the schedule required and who is considered able to fulfil that.

VOLUNTEER INDUCTION

All new regular volunteers will have an induction meeting with a Common Soil staff member to familiarise them with:

- The activities and site of Common Soil.
- The people involved in Common Soil.
- Health and safety.
- Common Soil's volunteer policy.

Other volunteers at work mornings or for occasional volunteering roles will receive appropriate health and safety briefings, according to the task being undertaken.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

For regular volunteers, there will be a probation period of 2 months, to ascertain whether the volunteer is suitable to volunteer regularly within the team. This will be established by the growers, through working with and supporting the volunteer.

There is no probationary period for occasional volunteering.

REVIEW AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Following the regular volunteer probation period, the volunteer will have the chance to speak with a staff member, at a mutually agreed time, to examine the volunteer's satisfaction in the role and their development. All regular volunteers should be offered equal access to ongoing support with the growers/other supervisor (e.g. Co-ordinator). This should provide volunteers with the opportunity to:

- Reflect on/share volunteer experiences
- Share/discuss problems that have arisen
- Discuss any areas of work they wish to develop, expand or change.

WHAT REGULAR VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM US

While they don't receive a wage for their service, regular volunteers do receive multiple benefits from working with Common Soil:

- Food growing experience and teaching
- References, if required for a job application or any other reason
- Support according to their role
- Relevant insurance
- Relevant out-of-pocket expenses as pre-agreed with the grower/staff team
- Community membership of Common Soil
- Veg from the harvest margins.

VOLUNTEERS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Common Soil recognises the rights of volunteers to:

1. Know what is (and what is not) expected of them.
2. Have adequate support in their volunteering.
3. Receive appreciation.
4. Volunteer in a safe environment and be insured.
5. Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong.
6. Be free from discrimination.
7. Be offered the opportunity for personal development.

EXPECTATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

Common Soil expects volunteers to:

1. Be reliable. It is most helpful to the organisation and growers to know who to expect and when and for those individuals to be there regularly and learn about Common Soil and the food growing techniques.
2. Be honest.
3. Respect confidentiality.
4. Make the most of support opportunities.
5. Follow instructions and carry out tasks within agreed guidelines provided by grower(s) or staff member on site.
6. Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation.
7. Respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute.
8. Comply with the organisation's policies and follow procedures and standards including health and safety and equal opportunities in relation to its staff, volunteers and members.

COMPLAINTS

Any volunteer may report a grievance in the first instance to the Common Soil Co-ordinator. In line with the GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (below), if they are not happy with the response it can be taken to the management committee through the Chair (Bernard Jarman). If there are any complaints against the volunteer then the grower manager / other supervisor (e.g. Co-ordinator) will discuss the matter with the volunteer and a written record will be kept. A volunteer will have the right to appeal in case of any complaints made against them.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS

It is the aim of Common Soil that all volunteers have a positive and rewarding experience while working with us. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that volunteers have a clear channel for airing issues and for making any grievances known to Common Soil core team. If you have any problems or issues related to your volunteering at Common Soil, you can raise these at the earliest opportunity with the one of the growers or the Co-ordinator. The sooner we are made aware of a problem, the sooner we can deal with it. Any

issues/problems discussed will be treated as confidential. Any written information regarding the issue or problem will remain in the volunteer's personal and confidential file. If after first raising the problem or issue with a grower or the Co-ordinator you feel further action should be taken you will be invited to communicate your grievance in writing to hello@commonsoil.org.uk (to be sent to members of the management committee). Your grievance will be subject to fair consideration. Within 30 days of receiving the complaint, an appointment will be made with you to meet with at least two members of the management committee, appointed as needed.

After the meeting, the management committee members will decide what other action is appropriate in relation to the specific grievance. The meeting between you and the management committee members may be followed by one/some of the following: ♦ Agreeing with you any action that will be taken and the timetable for it. ♦ Meeting with other relevant staff or volunteers to try to resolve the issue. ♦ Agreeing a monitoring process (further meetings etc to ensure that the issue doesn't arise again). ♦ Meeting with you subsequently to report on any action taken. The decision and additional actions will be recorded and logged in the relevant individual's/individuals' file(s). Any resolution will take account of the feelings of the parties involved and will be agreed within the policy and practice of Common Soil.

TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT

We hope that all volunteers will find working with us an enriching experience. However, any of the following actions will result in the volunteer being asked to leave by the management committee. • Theft of property belonging to Common Soil, another volunteer, the Common Soil core team or the wider membership; • Acts of violence towards a member of staff, another volunteer or against wider membership; • Malicious damage of property (e.g. private property, property of other volunteers); • Conviction for a criminal offence that undermines a volunteer's suitability; • Behaviours or an attitude that may cause harm to the reputation of Common Soil, harm to staff members or other volunteers, or that may impair the ability of others to do their work (whether paid or voluntary).

INSURANCE

All volunteers are covered under Common Soil's general insurance, which includes public liability insurance.

EVALUATION AND OF VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

All volunteers will be sent an annual volunteer survey. We would love to hear what you need and how we can improve your volunteering experience in future. Volunteers will also be encouraged by the Co-ordinator to answer some questions upon leaving. This will help us to develop and improve the future quality of volunteering at Common Soil.

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