

Catalyst Volunteer Policy

Mission

Catalyst is a forward thinking and modern strategic infrastructure organisation, facilitating leadership for the voluntary, community & social enterprise sector (VCSE) in Stockton-on-Tees.

Vision

To be the best practice infrastructure organisation in a strong, healthy VCSE sector. We have a vision of a coherent and single sector, working together in partnership with public bodies and private businesses as well as VCSE organisations to deliver services to the communities in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees and the Tees Valley.

Values:

A word cloud of Catalyst's values, with words in various colors (red, orange, green) and sizes. The words are: Socially-responsible, Flexible, Challenge, Determined, Inclusive, Fair, Developmental, Collaboration, Welcoming, Partnership, Leadership, Passionate, and Accountable.

Socially-responsible
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Why Include Volunteers?

We feel that volunteers play a vital role within our organisation and that their contribution enables us to deliver our services. We want to ensure that there are good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers, and that volunteers are well supported.

- Our role is to encourage voluntary activity, and we want to take a leading role in the involvement of residents as volunteers to help deliver our services.
- We need and welcome the skills and experiences people from all walks of life and communities, can bring to our work.
- Volunteers bring a different perspective to the organisation, often reflecting the views of the local community.
- Volunteers help to extend the services we are able to offer.
- Volunteering provides the opportunity to develop skills and experience to help them in their careers and other aspects of their lives. We want to provide these opportunities and will work to ensure volunteering in a mutually beneficial process.

Who is a volunteer?

A volunteer is any individual who undertakes unpaid activities on behalf of our organisation of their own free choice. Work experience placements are different to volunteering and further guidance should be sought from line management.

Volunteers may be involved in short or long-term activities or as a one off. Typical activities may include:

- Supporting fundraising or awareness raising events
- direct delivery of our services and projects
- helping in our office
- being part of our board of trustees

Roles and Responsibilities

Each volunteer will be supported and supervised by members of staff within Catalyst. The Catalyst team will provide guidance, support and supervision to volunteers to ensure that the volunteering experience is a positive and rewarding one.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no contractual obligation for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks. However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability and a reciprocal set of expectations. These are clearly set out in the Volunteer Agreement, which all volunteers will be expected to agree to and sign before they start volunteering with Catalyst.

Recruitment

All Catalyst volunteers will be required to complete the following before they will be considered to be an active volunteer:

- Catalyst volunteer application form.
- Catalyst general volunteer induction.
- Sign and return the Catalyst Volunteer Agreement.
- Sign and return the Catalyst Confidentiality Agreement.

Catalyst will also need to have two satisfactory references returned before volunteering can begin. In individual cases where there are reasons that only one reference can be provided this may be permitted at the discretion of the Volunteer Manager.

Some roles may require further paperwork such as DBS checks which will be undertaken in accordance with the latest guidance. DBS checks are only required for specific roles and are not a requirement for volunteering with us. The application process may differ to meet the requirements of specific roles or projects. This will be agreed by the volunteer co-ordinator for each project and the volunteer manager.

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to when recruiting volunteers and an additional form will be used to record monitoring information for our Equal Opportunities Policy.

Where it is reasonable to do so we will be flexible with the tasks within role descriptions – e.g. where some tasks may be difficult for a person with specific barriers, or to better fit the motivations of the individual.

Recruitment of volunteers for Catalyst will be supported by the volunteer manager who will draw up role descriptions with the relevant staff member. Opportunities will be advertised on our website, e-bulletin and via social media. All enquiries will be responded to within seven days.

The volunteer manager will assist in the recruitment process but the final decision regarding recruitment of any individual volunteers will be made by the relevant staff member. The Volunteer Manager and safeguarding lead will also advise on the use of DBS disclosures and other safeguarding measures where relevant to individual roles.

Where applicants are not able to be placed into their preferred role they will be given feedback and the opportunity to discuss other roles with ourselves or other local organisations.

Any new roles for volunteers must be agreed with the Volunteer Manager before they are advertised.

Induction and Training

All Catalyst Volunteers will complete a short induction process as follows:

The general Catalyst volunteer induction, which includes:

- 1) An introduction to Catalyst and the work we do.
- 2) An overview of the current volunteer roles currently available within Catalyst.
- 3) An explanation of the Catalyst Volunteer Agreement and the chance to ask any questions.
- 4) An explanation of the Catalyst Confidentiality Agreement and the chance to ask any questions.
- 5) An explanation of the volunteer expenses arrangements and details of how to claim.

Role specific Catalyst volunteer training, which includes:

- 1) A thorough explanation of the role and what it will involve.
- 2) An explanation of the role description and what duties the volunteer will be expected to carry out.
- 3) **For office-based roles:** a tour of Catalyst's offices with particular attention to the location of exits and the assembly point where the role involves regular visits to the office.
- 4) **For office- based roles:** Health and safety procedures including verbal instruction regarding the fire evacuation procedure, where the volunteer will be visiting the Catalyst office.
- 5) **For office-based roles:** Housekeeping e.g. use of Catalyst kitchen, location of toilets
- 6) For roles based in the community or at other organisations' premises points 3-5 will apply for the venue in which volunteering will take place.
- 7) An introduction to other volunteers and staff members as necessary to the specific role.

All Catalyst volunteers will be provided with the following:

- 1) A copy of the Volunteer Handbook containing copies of Catalysts' policies in respect of health and safety, equality and diversity, confidentiality and non-disclosure, and safeguarding
- 2) A copy of the Catalyst organisation chart
- 3) Expenses form and instruction as to its completion

Catalyst Good Neighbour Volunteers

Catalyst has launched a Good Neighbours volunteering scheme which works to enable volunteers to register as a Catalyst Volunteer and then be available to support numerous organisations. By registering as a Good Neighbour, volunteers are agreeing to be notified of opportunities to volunteer for any organisation across Stockton which requires short term or one-off support. Good Neighbour volunteers will complete the same application process and induction as all general Catalyst Volunteers. Any role- specific training required, including health and safety, will be provide by the organisation which has requested the support. Emergency contact details for Good Neighbour volunteers will be shared with the organisation which they are volunteering for in case of any medical or other emergency.

Taster period

Each volunteer will be offered a six-week taster period. At the end of the period they will meet with their supervisor. If both are happy with the role they will be confirmed as a Catalyst volunteers.

Support and Supervision

Each volunteer will have a named supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for training and supervising the volunteer, as well as giving feedback and answering queries.

All volunteers will be offered a one to one support meeting, either in person or virtually every quarter. These do not replace regular contact with the volunteer supervisor but provide an opportunity for feedback from both the volunteer and supervisor and any support to requested or offered. It is also an opportunity for any concerns or issues to be raised.

Bi-monthly group volunteer meetings will be delivered to provide updates on Catalyst, developments on volunteer projects and opportunities and general feedback from both sides.

These meetings will include training opportunities, external speakers from other VCSE organisations and other guest speakers.

Recognition

Recognising the contribution volunteers make to Catalyst is very important to us. Volunteers' supervisors will provide regular feedback and thanks for the work they are doing and strive to ensure volunteers feel appreciated.

The Volunteer Manager includes the valuable and vital contribution volunteers make to the services offered by Catalyst in reports submitted to the Catalyst Board to ensure recognition. Reports including the number of volunteer hours and the contribution volunteers make to the town are also submitted regularly to various Stockton Borough Council departments.

We recognise their contribution regularly through social media, national volunteering campaigns such as Volunteers' Week and by submitting volunteers for recognition through local and national campaigns and awards.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure

All volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality and non-disclosure as staff, as laid down in any Catalyst policy or by verbal instruction from their supervisor. All Catalyst volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement. This agreement extends to any information volunteers may come into contact with in the course of volunteering with other organisations as a Catalyst Good Neighbour volunteer. Breach of confidentiality is taken very seriously and may result in the termination of a volunteer's role and/or legal proceedings.

We are bound by the Data Protection Act to ensure that we treat volunteer information with respect. Catalyst will only collect data necessary to register individuals as volunteers. This includes personal information regarding any medical conditions we may need to be aware of to help to ensure the health and safety of volunteers and emergency contact details. All volunteer data will be securely stored in line with the Catalyst confidentiality and data protection policy. Only staff who need to see information for purposes related to volunteer involvement will be able to access it. Data will be shared with organisations which Catalyst Good Neighbour volunteers carry out work for, in order to ensure their health and safety. This includes medical and emergency contact details. We will not pass information to any other third parties without permission.

Expenses

It is the policy of Catalyst to reimburse relevant volunteer expenses on production of receipts or proof of travel payments.

Mileage expenses will be reimbursed in line with Catalyst Staff as outlined in section 2.7 on page 19 of the Catalyst Staff Handbook. The current rates recommended by HMRC (currently 45p per mile) up to a distance of 20 miles per volunteering session (£9.00 maximum). Reimbursement against any other form of public transport expenditure, will be paid up to a maximum of £9.00 in line with mileage expenses. Any claims above these limits will be considered on a case by case basis by their supervisor.

Volunteers who volunteer for an all-day session (more than 6 hours) outside of the Catalyst office, such as an event, are entitled to claim meal expenses up to the value of £5.00 but must provide receipts.

Problem-solving and volunteer complaints procedure

Catalyst acknowledges that sometimes problems do arise. In the first instance, any volunteer with a complaint or concern should bring it up with their supervisor. If the issue cannot be resolved by informal discussion, then it can be taken up formally through the problem-solving procedure.

The same process will be followed should a volunteer supervisor have any concerns or reason for complaint.

Volunteers will be made aware of the policy during the induction period.

Health and Safety

The primary duty owed to you by Catalyst is to ensure that you are safe while you are volunteering for us. Similarly all volunteers are required to carry out their duties in a safe and responsible manner that does not risk harm to either themselves, their colleagues or any other person. The Volunteering handbook includes a detailed health and safety section identifying the roles and responsibilities of volunteers, and posters setting out important information on health and safety are displayed in Catalyst House.

Each volunteer role is risk assessed when it is developed. Dynamic risk assessments are carried out for the duration a role is carried out to ensure any changes in circumstance or development of the role is considered. Feedback from volunteers will also be used to further risk assess any issues which may arise.

Any volunteer who is concerned that any aspect of Catalyst's activities poses a risk to health and safety should report this to their volunteer supervisor or Catalyst's Volunteer Manager immediately. Genuine concerns about health and safety will always be treated with the utmost seriousness and be thoroughly investigated.

Volunteers are required to comply with all instructions rules and procedures concerning matters of health and safety. Failure to do so may amount to gross misconduct. In particular, where employees are required to wear personal protective equipment such as hard hats, protective footwear or high visibility clothing then failure to do so will be treated as gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

Catalyst appreciates that all staff and volunteers have the right to work and volunteer in a safe environment. Therefore, all staff and volunteers must carry out their duties in line with Catalyst's Health and Safety Policy whilst engaged in their work/volunteering activity.

Volunteers are covered by Catalyst's Public Liability Insurance but if they wish to use their car to carry out any aspect of their volunteering role, the onus is on the volunteer to notify their insurance company to ensure that they are covered on their vehicle insurance. We can support volunteers by providing a template letter or list of insurance companies who generally cover volunteer driving.

Moving On

When volunteers leave their role, they will be asked to complete an exit survey to provide feedback on their volunteer experience. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses more fully if they wish to do so. Responses from exit surveys will be anonymised and kept confidentially, although key information may be used to inform Catalyst's volunteering offer and ensure continuing good practice.

Diversity

All volunteers will be expected to have an understanding and commitment to equal opportunities and diversity and will therefore be required to read and adhere to Catalyst’s Equal Opportunities Policy. Volunteers are expected to comply with this policy at all times. Volunteers may also request training in respect of diversity issues if they feel that would assist them in their volunteering role.

Catalyst is very sensitive to different cultures, lifestyles, backgrounds and languages and strives to ensure equality of opportunity to ensure that individuals are given equal access to information, services etc and requires all staff and volunteers to follow these principles. We will strive to provide extra support and make reasonable adjustments, if needed, for volunteers with additional needs including disability, language or mental health.

Links to other policies:

Other policies which may be relevant to this policy are listed on our website and include:

Volunteer agreement

Equal opportunities and diversity policy

Safeguarding Policy

Non-disclosure/ confidentiality policy

Health and safety Policy

Problem solving and volunteer complaints Policy

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