

Great Dixter Charitable Trust
Employment policies

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Policy sets out the principles for voluntary involvement at Great Dixter and is the foundation on which Great Dixter's relations with volunteers is based. The Policy helps ensure good management of volunteers in terms of consistency, fairness, legal compliance and support. It ensures that paid staff, management and trustees understand why volunteers are involved and the role they play.
- 1.2 The Great Dixter Charitable Trust is committed to implementing high standards and improving levels of best practice in volunteer management and experience. The policy will be subject to review to ensure it remains appropriate to the needs of Great Dixter and its volunteers in compliance with legislation and case law.
- 1.3 This policy is relevant to all Great Dixter staff and current and potential volunteers. It will be made available to staff and volunteers with printed copies held by line managers and at volunteer information locations.
- 1.4 The policy will be available on Great Dixter's website and accessible to potential volunteers and other interested parties.
- 1.5 New staff at Great Dixter will be informed about the Volunteering Policy and information about the role volunteers play at Great Dixter is included in staff induction sessions.
- 1.6 This policy is binding in honour only, and is not intended to create any form of legally binding contract between Great Dixter and its volunteers.

2.0 DEFINITION OF A VOLUNTEER

- 2.1 A volunteer is someone who contributes, for free, their time, skills and experience to an organisation or group. As a consequence of volunteering, a volunteer may gain work experience and develop new skills. Volunteers may similarly benefit from opportunities for self development.
- 2.2 Although volunteers are not bound by any enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, they are answerable to the same legal requirements as paid employees with regard to health and safety, equal opportunities and child safeguarding. Great Dixter expects that volunteers engage with the principles of the Trust and to observe the same requirements for professionalism and confidentiality as paid staff. Volunteers will be expected to have the same standards of behaviour. If these are breached Great Dixter may cease the volunteering arrangement.
- 2.3 Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity which is supported and encouraged at Great Dixter but it is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. As a result Great Dixter aims to put the flexibility and informality of volunteers to best effect to compliment but not replace the work of paid staff.

2.4 Expenses

There is no budget available for volunteers' expenses except for work experience residential placements who receive reasonable expenses to cover meals for the days they work (a pre-set estimate of £15 per day). Any additional travel undertaken by volunteers and work experience students which has been agreed as part of their duties will be reimbursed upon production of a receipt.

3.0 VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES AT GREAT DIXTER

- 3.1 Volunteers can become involved at many different levels of skill and involvement. This can include volunteering both on site, for example working in the garden or on the archive, and off site in support of wider outreach activities, for example staffing a display about Great Dixter at local events or providing help with sewing projects.

3.2 Current provision

Volunteers are currently involved with a range of tasks at Great Dixter. These include garden maintenance and development, nursery work, archive sorting and cataloguing, helping with educational activities, repairing house furnishings and supporting on-site activity, e.g. making refreshments. In addition, individuals also volunteer their time and skills as Trustees and committee members.

3.3 Work experience

There is an established programme of work experience for trainee gardeners. These individuals come for short term residential stays of up to a year to gain practical skills and experience. Students from outside the EU are sponsored to obtain temporary charity worker visas, essential for paid or unpaid work in the UK. Work experience students receive expenses to cover meals for days worked.

4.0 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

4.1 Great Dixter will ensure a fair and consistent process for recruiting and selecting volunteers. This process must reflect what is appropriate and relevant to each volunteer role and task. Volunteers will be recruited on a demand led basis which will match Great Dixter's projects and activities.

Tasks identified for volunteer involvement must be considered for their ability to provide identifiable benefits and outcomes which will motivate volunteers.

4.2 Diversity

Great Dixter is committed to diversity in all areas of its work and this includes the recruitment of volunteers. We believe we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity makes our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. We aim to develop and maintain an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences can participate and contribute.

Recruitment of volunteers will reflect Great Dixter's commitment to Equal Opportunities and diversity as expressed in its Recruitment, Training and Equal Opportunities Policy.

4.3 Advertising

Where volunteers are needed for specific activities, an advertisement will be placed on our website. With many of our volunteer activities we have more people volunteering to help than we can cope with, especially for garden places. There is an area on the website about volunteering and enquiries will be dealt with by the Education Officer.

4.4 Age limit

Great Dixter recognises the social and skills benefits available to volunteers and in turn the skills and other benefits volunteers of all ages can bring to Great Dixter. There is no minimum age requirement for volunteers provided they are undertaking tasks for which there is no legal minimum and that they are suitably supervised if they are under the age of 18. Equally, there is no specific upper age limit. However, Great Dixter has a responsibility to ensure volunteers do not carry out tasks or continue volunteering to a point where volunteering is detrimental to their own and other people's safety.

4.5 Screening

Certain roles may require screening, for example references and DBS checks. Where these are required this will be made clear in volunteer advertising and selection methodology.

4.6 Selection

Recruitment will be carried out in compliance with best practice.

Potential volunteers will be invited for an informal interview with a member of Great Dixter staff. The interview will discuss their suitability, skills, experience and

interests, their expected volunteering level in terms of skills and time commitment and what they hope to get from their time as a volunteer with Great Dixter.

Group volunteer opportunities will require a member of Great Dixter staff to liaise with the group's volunteer manager to clarify group tasks, areas of involvement, level of commitment and the group's wishes and aims for their involvement.

Successful volunteers will receive an acceptance letter and guidance where appropriate will be given to those not selected.

5.0 INDUCTION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Induction

New volunteers will receive an informal induction which will include introductions to all staff and other volunteers present. There will be an opportunity for a brief discussion clarifying their envisaged role and the skills they will be bringing and hope to develop at Great Dixter.

Each volunteer will receive a copy of an information pack which will contain a background to Great Dixter, staff list, general volunteering information and specific information relating to their volunteering role, location and task.

Following a pre agreed trial period new volunteers will have an informal discussion with their manager to discuss any areas of concern and positive experiences of their volunteering experience to date.

5.2 Training

Great Dixter will provide volunteers with the training, support and information necessary for them to carry out their role. Volunteers will be asked to attend any necessary training such as induction, health and safety and customer relations.

On occasions Great Dixter together with volunteers may identify opportunities for progression and the development of skills. Where appropriate, volunteers may be encouraged and supported to take on new roles or assume greater involvement.

6.0 HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

6.1 Great Dixter expects to:

- Respect the rights of volunteers and implement and regularly review policies and practices which relate to volunteer involvement.
- Ensure that volunteers are provided with the information and support they need to carry out their role.
- Support dialogue between staff and volunteers and provide volunteers with effective lines of communication.
- Consult volunteers about decisions which would substantially affect the performance of their tasks.
- Treat all volunteers equally and fairly and ensure they are aware of complaints procedures.
- Provide and maintain a safe working environment.
- Ensure that Great Dixter's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and the liability towards them.

6.2 Great Dixter hopes Volunteers will:

- Ensure familiarity with the visions and aims of Great Dixter.
- Develop and maintain good relationships with Great Dixter staff, volunteers and visitors and be honest if there are any problems.

- Work in compliance with Great Dixter's policies, in particular those detailing access, inclusion and health and safety.
- Be bound by the same requirements for professionalism, confidentiality and behavioural standards as paid staff.
- Carry out their duties as agreed with their manager.
- Ensure good timekeeping and inform their manager as a soon as possible regarding absence or future changes to attendance.
- Not use or disclose to any person any confidential information they may have obtained in the course of their volunteering experience with Great Dixter, either during their volunteering or at any time afterwards.

6.3 Recognition

All staff and volunteers responsible for volunteer management will be encouraged to ensure regular and appropriate acknowledgement of volunteers' contribution.

The activities delivered by volunteers will be recorded in the annual report, reports to the board of trustees and other relevant internal and public publications.

6.4 Record keeping

We ask all volunteers to complete a contact details form including emergency and medical contact details. This information will be held in compliance with current data protection law and case studies.

7 LEAVING

We ask volunteers to give us as much notice as possible if they wish to stop volunteering.

The policy of the Trust is to comply with current legislation and advise staff accordingly

Policy adopted 2016