Volunteer Policy

Harwich Festival and Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre
Policy 05 | Version 2.0 | Revised 25 October 2026
Owner: General Manager | Scheduled review: 25 October 2027

Purpose and scope

We value the time, skills and experience volunteers contribute to Harwich Festival and HAHC. Volunteers help us deliver cultural, artistic and community activities, welcome visitors and support the centre. We aim to provide a fair, safe and supportive experience. This policy covers operational volunteers; trustees also have separate governance duties.

Roles and recruitment

Roles may include event support, front of house, stewarding, practical work and administration. Give each volunteer clear information about tasks, the named supervisor, expected boundaries, relevant risks and any required skills. Discuss availability and support needs; do not assign duties beyond someone's competence or agreed role.

Recruit fairly and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate. Obtain relevant contact details and an emergency contact with suitable privacy information. Assess safeguarding requirements and undertake references and legally eligible DBS checks where the role requires them. Being a volunteer does not itself require an enhanced DBS check. Agree appropriate supervision and restrictions for volunteers under 18.

Induction support and supervision

Before duties begin, explain the role, safety arrangements, emergency procedures, first-aid arrangements, safeguarding, equality, confidentiality, conduct and how to raise a concern. Provide activity-specific instruction, equipment and protective clothing where required. Identify a supervisor available during the work, including evening and offsite events.

Offer relevant guidance and training, listen to feedback and review how the role is working. Tell volunteers about changes affecting their duties. Volunteers must be able to decline a task or stop if they feel unsafe, unwell, insufficiently trained or unable to continue. Report the situation promptly so the organiser can arrange safe cover.

What we expect

Treat people respectfully, follow agreed instructions, use equipment safely and report hazards, incidents and safeguarding concerns promptly. Respect personal information and use only authorised systems. Do not act as a spokesperson, commit expenditure, make commitments or represent yourself as an employee without authority. Follow the Code of Conduct and relevant safeguarding and social-media rules.

Expenses and insurance

Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed when agreed in advance and supported by receipts or other acceptable evidence. Check the current approved travel rates and approval arrangements before spending. No volunteer may approve their own claim. Explain any limits before costs are incurred and avoid arrangements that exclude people who cannot afford to pay first.

The General Manager must check that insurance covers the relevant people and activities. Insurance does not remove the need for safe arrangements, nor does it mean every activity or personal possession is covered. Volunteers should report incidents and relevant changes promptly.

Concerns and fair treatment

Raise ordinary concerns with the supervisor or General Manager. Use the Complaints Policy if the issue cannot be resolved, and the Whistleblowing Policy for concerns about wrongdoing. Concerns involving management may be raised privately with the Chair of Trustees. Safeguarding and emergencies must use their own reporting routes immediately.

We will listen fairly, explain concerns about a volunteer's conduct or performance, and consider support, training or a change of role. Where necessary to protect people or the charity, we may pause duties while facts are considered. Decisions must be proportionate, without discrimination or retaliation for reporting a concern.

Ending a role

Volunteering is intended to be voluntary and non-contractual, without an obligation to provide or perform work. The actual arrangement, rather than this label alone, determines legal status. Either party may end the volunteering arrangement; reasonable notice is appreciated but is not a contractual requirement. Seek advice if the role begins to resemble paid employment or a worker relationship.

On leaving, return keys, equipment and records, remove access to systems, and explain any continuing confidentiality responsibilities. Offer an opportunity for feedback. Retain only necessary records under Policy 20.

Contact and review

Contact contact@harwichfestival.com, 01255 319191, or Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre, Main Road, Dovercourt, Essex, CO12 4AJ. Review the policy annually and after significant changes to volunteering arrangements.

Prepared for adoption. Record authorised approval in the master register. Review sooner after a significant change or incident.

Reference guidance
gov.uk - safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees
gov.uk - volunteers rights