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**Blooming Gardeners CIC**

**Volunteer Policy**

Blooming Gardeners welcomes volunteers to support and work alongside our Horticultural Trainers and Gardeners. We recognise and value the contribution volunteers make to the Blooming Gardeners. The overarching vision of Blooming Gardeners is to maintain and improve the health and well-being of individuals with potential exclusion issues through involvement in horticulture.

We aim to:

* Provide a safe and supportive environment for our gardeners to enable them to develop transferable horticultural skills thus promoting an increased sense of self-worth
* Reduce the isolation experienced by our gardeners through opportunities to develop new and sustained friendships and improved independence skills
* Assist our gardeners in developing awareness, understanding and responsibility for their natural and social environment through discussion and example.
* Encourage social inclusion by involving volunteers and community groups in horticultural and nature-based projects with Blooming Gardeners.

The involvement of volunteers will be guided by the following principles:

* The tasks to be carried out by volunteers will be clearly defined so that all are sure of their roles and responsibilities.
* Volunteering activities will complement rather than replace the work of paid staff.

**Recruitment of volunteers**

Volunteers will be asked to complete an application form outlining their skills and previous relevant experience. All volunteers will be required to provide 2 references. There will be no discrimination based on any of the 'protected characteristics' set out in Blooming Gardeners ***Equal Opportunities Policy***. The application will be considered by the Blooming Gardeners Board.

As volunteers will be working alongside vulnerable adults, consent will be sought for a Disclosure check from Disclosure Scotland under the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (see https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme). If consent is not given, the application will not proceed.

Volunteering activities will only begin once a satisfactory Disclosure check has been received.

See also Blooming Gardeners ***Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy***

**Induction and training**

Once accepted, a timetable will be agreed with the volunteer for when and where they will be working. Volunteers will be accepted for a 6 week trial period initially. During this time they will

receive guidance from our Horticultural Trainers on working with our gardeners. They will be expected to understand and comply with Blooming Gardeners aims and policies. They will work alongside the Trainers and gardeners in undertaking gardening tasks or other tasks appropriate to the operation of Blooming Gardeners. Although no formal training will be provided, volunteers will be able to develop their skills through practical experience and informal instruction. At the end of the trial period there will be a review to consider future volunteering and any concerns the volunteer might have.

**Supervision and support**

Blooming Gardeners is a small organisation. We work with no more than 6 gardeners per horticultural Trainer a day. There is always a Horticultural Trainer present to supervise and support our gardeners and volunteers. This will include discussing any ideas and concerns the volunteer might have.

When volunteers have holidays or other commitments which mean that they cannot attend their normal volunteering sessions, they should inform a Horticultural Trainer in advance. If they need a longer break from volunteering they should also discuss this with a Horticultural Trainer.

All volunteers are covered under Blooming Gardeners' Public Liability Insurance

**Expenses**

Assistance will be given with travel expenses to and from Blooming Gardeners sites, the amount to be agreed in advance with the Board. When a volunteer is asked to attend a training event, the full cost will be met by Blooming Gardeners.

**Health and safety**

See Blooming Gardeners ***Health and Safety Policy***

**Confidentiality and data protection**

Blooming Gardeners will comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in the storage and use of data held about the volunteer.

See Blooming Gardeners ***Privacy Statement***

**Problem solving and complaint procedures for volunteers.**

If a volunteer has concerns or complaints about the volunteering experience with Blooming Gardeners, this should first be discussed with one of the Horticultural Trainers. If this does not resolve the concern, the volunteer should contact a member of the Board of Directors not connected to the incident. A meeting will then be arranged with members of the Board, the horticultural trainer(s) and the volunteer within (3 weeks) to discuss the matter further and agree a solution. Where a concern is raised about a volunteer, the Horticultural Trainer will discuss this with the volunteer. Should there be ongoing concerns the Horticultural Trainer will seek advice from the Blooming Gardeners Board and a review meeting will be held to determine whether the person can continue to volunteer with the organisation.

**Changes to the Volunteer Policy**

The Volunteer Policy will be reviewed annually, to ensure it remains current and fit for purpose. Feedback from volunteers will be encouraged through their regular contact with the Horticultural Trainers.