

The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project



Volunteer Policy - October 2011

Cairngorms Walking to Health Project - Volunteer Policy

Contents

1. Overview
2. Overall Context
 - 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Rights and Responsibilities
 - 2.3 Disclosure Checks
3. Volunteer Policy – for use by local health walk schemes
 - 3.1 Background Information
 - 3.2 Statement of Principles of Good Practise
 - 3.3 Recruitment and Selection
 - 3.4 Conduct and Behaviour
 - 3.5 Support for Volunteer walk leaders
 - 3.6 Volunteer walk leaders on Steering Group
 - 3.7 Rights and Responsibilities
 - 3.8 Employer Supported Volunteering
 - 3.9 Local Volunteering Sector
 - 3.10 Reviewing the Policy and Procedures
 - 3.11 Responsibility
4. Appendices
 - 4.1 Volunteer Agreement
 - 4.2 Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures

1. Overview

The purpose of this document is to set out the volunteer policy for the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project. This is a working document and as such will be added to and revised.

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The aim of the Project is to support the development of local walking for health groups to improve physical, mental and social wellbeing of participants in the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding communities. This will be done by developing and supporting local health walk groups. We will also assist local organisations to host walks organised by volunteer walk leaders.
- 2.1.2 Volunteer walk leaders are recognised by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust as a major resource. We will continue to recruit, encourage, train, develop and support volunteer involvement in health walks.
- 2.1.3 The time, energy and skills offered by the volunteer's benefits our work and help us to achieve our aims. Experience has shown that volunteering also brings benefits to volunteers themselves and to those with whom they are involved.
- 2.1.4 The Project uses the Paths for All definition of a volunteer as *'a person who does voluntary activities on our behalf and on behalf of their local community.'*
- 2.1.5 The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project believes that the relationship with the volunteer walk leaders is one of mutual respect, responsibility and commitment, within which The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project and the volunteers both have rights and responsibilities. We hope that volunteer walk leaders will enjoy their involvement and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives.

2.2 Rights and Responsibilities

- 2.2.1 Working with the volunteer walk leaders across the Cairngorms health walk network we will recognise the rights of volunteers to expect the following support from the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project:
- Provision of Volunteer Walk Leader training and additional training to support volunteers in their role.
 - Provision of free insurance for Walk Leaders who complete the Walk Leader training course.
 - A 'support pack' with rucksack, PPE, basic equipment to look after walkers safely.
 - Regular walking meetings to share ideas and hear from other volunteer walk leaders.
 - Advice and support from the Project Co-ordinators to help volunteer walk leaders to carry out their roles effectively.

2.2.2 In return, the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project expects the following from volunteers:

- Carry out volunteering activities in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project.
- Attend training and support sessions when required or selected.
- Respect other volunteers, walkers and staff.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Complete required registration and evaluation paperwork and contribute to the PfA led walk database.
- Carry out tasks with regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.

2.3 Disclosure Scotland

2.3.1 Disclosure Scotland is a service designed to enhance public safety by providing employers and volunteer involving organisations with criminal history information on individuals applying for posts. If it is part of a volunteer's role to be involved with children and/or vulnerable adults, then the COAT Health walk Co-ordinator will discuss the need for a Disclosure to be taken on a volunteer and will then ensure that this is carried out.

3. Volunteer Policy

3.1 Background Information

3.1.1 The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project aims to support the development of local walking to health groups to improve physical, mental and social wellbeing of participants in the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding area.

3.1.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to the COAT Management Group members and volunteer walk leaders supported by the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project.

3.2 Statement of Principles of Good Practice

3.2.1 We will be guided by the following principles of good practice when working with volunteer walk leaders:

- Walks will be hosted by local health walk groups or partner organisations. It is the responsibility of the local groups to ensure that the walk leaders are suitable for the role.
- All partner organisations hosting walks and volunteer walk leaders will be required to complete a Partnership Agreement which, amongst other things sets out the need for organisations to have a clear volunteer policy in place.
- The role of volunteer walk leaders will be clearly defined, so that all concerned with their activities are sure of their respective roles and responsibilities. (see Volunteer Agreement for volunteer walk leaders, Appendix 4.1)
- The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project will comply with the Data Protection Act by the use of forms and by keeping records of walks carried out done by volunteers as a basis for monitoring, and by enabling volunteers to have access to their records.
- Opportunities will be given for volunteers to represent their views to the co-ordinators of the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project.
- Policies and procedures on volunteer walk leaders will be regularly monitored and reviewed.
- Respect for human rights and equal opportunity.

3.3 Recruitment and Selection

3.3.1 The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project will recruit and select volunteer walk leaders on a fair and equal opportunities basis.

3.3.2 All volunteer walk leader opportunities will be promoted appropriately, will specify the task to be undertaken, drawing attention to the benefits and experience to be gained from participation.

3.3.3 Volunteers will be required to complete a volunteer partnership agreement form. Support will be available to assist volunteers with the completion of forms.

- 3.3.4 The task description of the duties of volunteer walk leaders will be outlined in the volunteer walk leader training. Time and commitment is flexible and can be negotiated to match the needs of the volunteer walk leader.
- 3.3.5 Walks that are organised by local partner organisations e.g. care agencies, associations, charities etc. It is the responsibility of local partner organisations to ensure that all volunteer walk leaders are suitable for their role e.g. they have been recruited through a process that involves taking up of references, and that volunteers who will be involved with working with vulnerable adults will be required to undertake the necessary Disclosure Scotland checks.
- 3.3.6 We will regularly review the way in which potential volunteers can make contact with us.

3.4 Conduct and Behaviour

- 3.4.1 Given that the walks are organised by local groups/organisations it is expected that most issues with regard to Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures will be dealt with by the local organisations themselves. However any volunteer walk leader with a grievance specific to the walk or who is concerned about the conditions of their volunteer walk leading should talk about the problem with The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project Co-ordinators. Please see Appendix 4.2 for Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures.
- 3.4.2 Similarly, if the conduct and behaviour of a volunteer walk leader is considered to be unsatisfactory or in breach of the Partnership Agreement for Volunteers the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project Grievances and Disciplinary Procedure will apply.

3.5 Support for Volunteer Walk leaders

- 3.5.1 The Project co-ordinators will liaise with volunteer walk leaders in their first weeks running walks and will offer an informal review session for volunteers to assess the progress of their walks and to resolve any problems at an early stage.
- 3.5.2 Volunteer walk leaders will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred as a result of their duties. Depending upon the resources of the individual organisation this will be from The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project. Volunteer walk leaders will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim. Volunteer walk leaders will also be supplied with a 'Support Pack' to include; a rucksack, COAT branded fleece gilet, a whistle, First Aid Kit (if holding a valid Certificate), high viz vest, map case.)
- 3.5.3 Volunteer Walk Leaders who have completed the Volunteer Walk Leader Training Course will be registered for free insurance cover.

- 3.5.4 All volunteer walk leaders will be given access to regular walking meetings for mutual support and guidance.
- 3.5.5 All volunteers who wish to become Walk Leaders must undertake the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project Walk Leader training.
- 3.5.6 Volunteer walk leaders will be encouraged to provide each other with mutual support within the bounds of confidentiality.
- 3.5.7 The organisation's Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures (see Appendix 4.2) will be explained to volunteers. Complaints about volunteers will be dealt with in a fair way.

3.6 Rights and Responsibilities

- 3.6.1 In working with volunteer walk leaders, we recognise the rights of volunteers to:
 - Know what is expected of them and to be given clear information.
 - Have clearly specified lines of support and supervision.
 - Be informed of who to contact in an emergency.
 - Be shown respect, confidentiality and privacy.
 - Be shown appreciation.
 - Have safe volunteering conditions.
 - Be insured.
 - Know what their rights and responsibilities are.
 - Be reimbursed expenses.
 - Be entitled to take holidays and breaks from volunteering.
 - Be trained and receive ongoing opportunities for learning and development.
 - Be free from discrimination.
 - Experience personal development through their participation as volunteers.
 - Be consulted, involved and listened to on issues affecting the project as a whole.
 - Withdraw from voluntary activities through their own choice.

- 3.6.2 It is the volunteer walk leader's responsibility to:
 - Carry out their tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project.
 - Volunteer within agreed guidelines and remits.
 - Attend within agreed times.
 - Respect confidentiality.
 - Respect other volunteers, walkers and staff.
 - Respect the human rights of others.
 - Carry out their tasks with regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.
 - Attend training and support sessions where appropriate.
 - Disclose information that may have an effect on their suitability to volunteer, at any time during their involvement with the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project. Such information will be dealt with confidentially.

- 3.6.3 Volunteer Walk Leaders will also be expected to:

- Ensure that each walk is suitable for the ability of individuals within the walking group.
- Make the effort to attend Volunteer Walk Leader meetings whenever possible.
- Lead the walks in the manner specified at the Volunteer Walk Leader training including making new participants feel welcome.
- Inform participants of health messages when appropriate.
- Let a suitable contact person know, well in advance, if you are unable to lead a walk to allow time for a replacement to be found.
- Ensure that a register of attendance is completed at each walk and to make sure that each walker has completed the paperwork to comply with the PfA led walk database. Be aware of the health issues of walkers attending the walks.

3.6.4 In addition, Volunteer Walk Leaders should expect:

- A fun, informative Volunteer Walk Leader training day provided free of charge. This is a nationally recognised training course for which you will receive a certificate of attendance.
- First Aid training if appropriate.
- Support in the form of Volunteer Walk Leader walking meetings to ask questions, share views and get ideas and support from other volunteer walk leaders.
- To have the contact details of The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project Co-ordinators in the event that you require advice or assistance on any aspect of walk leading.
 - To be provided with templates for the relevant paperwork necessary for leading walks e.g. led walk database paperwork, registers etc.

3.7 Local Volunteering Sector

3.7.1 We will work with other local initiatives that promote volunteering and will adopt any relevant good practice guidelines produced by VDS.

3.8 Reviewing the Policy and Procedures

3.8.1 The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project will monitor and review this Volunteer Policy on an ongoing basis.

4. Appendix

4.1. Volunteer Agreement

TBA

4.2 Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures

It is hoped that much of the day-to-day settlements of any difficulties can be achieved through the normal channels of communication. However, where this is not possible, the purpose of this procedure is to provide for the orderly resolution of joint problems and to secure prompt and fair disposition of grievances.

Discipline and grievance procedures may sound rather formal but they are intended to promote fairness. COAT members of staff who are involved in any matters brought under the Grievance and Disciplinary procedures will not be eligible to play any part in the formal procedures outlined here.

We anticipate that most grievance and disciplinary matters will be dealt with by the Chief Executive of COAT.

1. Grievance Procedure

If a volunteer walk leader has a grievance about their role in co-ordinating walks in relation to The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project she/he should proceed as follows:

Stage 1: The volunteer should talk to one of the Networking Co-ordinators. It should be made clear to the Co-ordinator that a complaint, however informal, is being made.

Stage 2: If the problem is not resolved, the volunteer should put the complaint in writing and request a meeting with both Networking Co-ordinators and one other member of the COAT Management Group who will act as chairperson. This meeting should be arranged as soon as possible after receiving the written complaint and ideally within one working week of the date of the written complaint. The volunteer walk leader may take a colleague with him/her to the meeting. At the meeting the chairperson should take a note of the complaint and any agreement that is made to resolve the problem. The volunteer walk leader and the chairperson should sign the note.

Stage 3: If the problem is not resolved, then the volunteer walk leader should write to the COAT Management Group requesting a further meeting with Management Group members. The Management Group will organise an ad-hoc Sub-Group to resolve the issue – this should consist of 3 members who have not been previously involved in the matter. The meeting should ideally be held within one week of the request being made. The volunteer walk leader may be accompanied by a colleague who may act as representative. The decision of the Sub-Group is final and will be notified to the volunteer walk leader within seven days of the meeting. The decision will be put to the next scheduled meeting of the Steering Group for ratification.

2. Disciplinary Procedure

The following procedure will be followed where the Health walk coordinator consider that there may have been misconduct on the part of the volunteer:

Stage 1: If the coordinator considers that a volunteer walk leader's conduct or behaviour is causing concern, then the matter will be discussed and, if appropriate, the Scheme Co-ordinator will warn the volunteer walk leader verbally. This decision will be recorded and, where appropriate communicated to the agency hosting the volunteer walk leader.

Stage 2: If the coordinator considers that the volunteer walk leader's misconduct is serious, or the volunteer walk leader has failed to heed a verbal warning, then the coordinator will write to the volunteer walk leader explaining the nature of the offence and that the letter constitutes a written warning. A copy of this letter will be sent to the host organisation where relevant.

Stage 3: If the volunteer walk leader repeats the offence, the coordinator will ask the volunteer walk leader, and a representative of the host organisation where appropriate, to attend a meeting ideally within seven working days. The volunteer walk leader may be accompanied by a colleague who may act as representative. At the meeting the volunteer walk leader will be allowed to state his/her own case. The coordinator will conduct a thorough investigation and will make known a decision, in writing, to the volunteer walk leader as soon as possible and ideally within seven days of the meeting. The Networking Co-ordinator may decide that the volunteer walk leader can no longer lead walks under the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project name.

Stage 4: In cases of gross misconduct, such as assault and theft, the coordinator should liaise where appropriate to ensure that an immediate investigation is conducted and witnesses are interviewed. In such cases the coordinator may dispense with stages 1 & 2 and after a meeting with the volunteer walk leader, as described in stage 3, ask the volunteer walk leader to leave the scheme. The coordinator may decide to suspend a volunteer walk leader temporarily, pending the outcome of an investigation.

Appeal: Any volunteer walk leader who is asked to leave the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project permanently may appeal against the decision by writing to the COAT Management Group. A Sub-Group specially convened and empowered for this purpose will hold a meeting, ideally within seven days of the request, to hear the case. The decision of the Sub-Group is final and will be communicated to the volunteer walk leader as soon as possible and ideally within seven days. The decision will be put to the next scheduled meeting of the Management Group for ratification.