

RG spaces

Volunteer Policy

RG SPACES is absolutely delighted to be helped by volunteers. In fact, almost all our work will be done by volunteers and we have no employees of our own. This policy is intended to help those thinking about volunteering as well as volunteers already with us to understand how volunteers fit into RG spaces.

What is RG spaces?

We are a small charitable organization registered by the Charity Commission in 2015. Our aim is to help enhance publicly accessible spaces in and around Reading (hence the RG). We do this by working with the owners and users of spaces like museums, galleries, libraries, open spaces and other real or virtual sites, providing help with enhancing the physical space and/or the virtual (web) space associated with it. You can read more about our activities on <http://rgspaces.org.uk>

How we work

We raise funds, coordinate expert consultants and volunteers, run projects and work with other organisations, helping to improve publicly accessible spaces for example by providing resources, equipment or technical help.

How do we make our volunteer needs known?

We will keep our volunteering opportunities up-to-date on our website and/or will advertise through other agencies as appropriate, for example Reading Voluntary Action (www.rva.org.uk).

If you would like to make a general enquiry about volunteering, or have a suggested role you would like to play, we'd also be delighted to hear from you. Just email or write to us. Our contact details are available on our website.

How do we select volunteers?

Apart from one-off community-support type of volunteering (e.g. a friend helping out at an event) or a short fixed-term project not involving working with others, normally a potential volunteer will be asked to send us a short CV with an outline of why they would like to join us. We ask for the names of two referees and will normally take up at least one reference to check out information relevant to the volunteering role. At this point we will hold your personal details, including CV and reference(s) on our system.

If there seems to be a volunteer role for you that would suit both of us, we will normally invite you to have a chat with us at a convenient location. During the chat we will explore together how best you might help us. When we have together agreed a way forward, we will email you a Volunteer Agreement (you can see an example agreement on our website). If you are happy with your Agreement then the volunteering can begin as agreed (possibly subject to DBS check, see below). If there is something you feel should be altered in your agreement, you must let us know and we'll do our best to accommodate any changes to suit us both.

If we can't immediately find a suitable opportunity we will keep your details from about a year in case another opportunity arises. And of course, we encourage you to keep an eye out for opportunities on our website.

Starting to volunteer

A named person will be your main Contact within RG spaces. They will be responsible for your induction, agreeing times/places of work and defining your role and the tasks you will carry out in consultation with you. There is a short induction list (which can be found on our website) which you can use with your Contact to check you have the information you need.

While you are volunteering

Once you start volunteering, you and your main Contact will stay in touch (often by email, sometimes by meeting and working alongside each other). During this time, we will keep some information on you, but only that necessary for your volunteering role.

The minimum information we will hold is your given- and family-names, your email address and the email we sent you with your Volunteer Agreement. If you would like us to, we will also hold: your address and/or details of next of kin (in case of an emergency). We will not hold any other data unless it is relevant to your Volunteering Role, and you can ask to see what information we are holding (subject to any conditions in English law).

Expenses

A volunteer does not receive payment or other reward for volunteering (this includes training unless it is relevant to the agreed volunteer role). However, we do recognize that it may be difficult for someone to volunteer if they are going to be left out of pocket. We therefore have a policy that travel expenses can be reimbursed if the volunteer wishes at a rate no greater than the standard train or bus-fare for travel from normal place of residence to wherever your Contact has agreed you should be. All expenses must be agreed in advance with the main Contact. As a small organization with a small income, we unfortunately may have to decide that if the requirement for expenses is too great, we will have to terminate the agreement.

We do not normally reimburse subsistence and regret that we cannot afford to help with caring costs.

Expenses must be claimed in writing within 3 months of being incurred and will only be paid against valid receipts.

DBS checks and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

We do not have a blanket policy of DBS checking as this can be disproportionate, costly, and potentially takes unnecessary time. RG spaces' policy is to get DBS checks done when a risk analysis on the volunteering task indicates that this is necessary in order to lower the risk to an acceptable level. In the main, our projects do not involve direct, unsupervised contact with vulnerable people or other regulated activity and DBS enhanced plus barring list checks are not routinely carried out.

When a DBS check is required for all or part of a volunteering role, the Volunteer Agreement will make this plain. In this case the volunteer may not undertake those parts of their role before RG spaces has verified with them by email exchange or otherwise in writing that a satisfactory check has been received.

Volunteers are required to follow RG Spaces' safeguarding policies. These can be found on <http://rgspaces.org.uk> under 'Policies'.

Insurance

Details of the insurance RG spaces holds can be found on the website.

We are not able to take responsibility for your personal effects and suggest you do not bring anything valuable with you other than equipment you may be using in your role. You should keep such equipment with you, or organize a place to store it with us which you are happy with.

Complaints

If you are not happy with some aspect of your volunteering, please discuss this informally with your main Contact. If you feel this is not possible, or you feel the discussion does not lead to a satisfactory outcome, please contact a trustee. If matters are still not resolved, the Chair will be asked to consider the situation and decide on a way forward. The Chair's decision will be final.

If RG spaces feels dissatisfied with your performance or conduct, your main Contact will discuss the issue informally with you first. If you fail to find a mutually satisfactory way forward, your Contact will ask a trustee to look into the matter. If this fails to find a solution, the Chair will be asked to consider the situation as above. The Chair's decision will be final.

Stopping volunteering

As a volunteer you are free to stop volunteering with us at any time. If you wish to stop volunteering for us, we would be grateful if you could let us know as far in advance as possible so we can make alternative

arrangements. We are likewise free to ask you to stop acting as a volunteer at any time. We will endeavour to give you as much notice as possible.

When you stop volunteering with us, we will delete your personal information from our system at the end of the calendar year after the one in which you stop (this is to allow you to easily re-apply to volunteer with us if your circumstances change in the meantime) but we will remove your information before that if you ask us via email. There may be exceptions to this, for example if we are legally obliged to keep records of those working with vulnerable people. If we need to keep more information, we will let you know when you stop volunteering by email what information we are keeping, for how long and why together with details of how we aim to keep the information up-to-date and relevant.

Asking us to provide a reference

RG spaces as an organization keeps minimal information on a volunteer, even while they are actively volunteering. If you would like a reference from RG spaces as an organization please feel free to ask but its detail might be confined to the type of tasks you are doing and the date you began. It is up to individual Contacts whether they feel able to give a more in-depth individual reference from them personally. Please do not cite RG spaces or your Contact as a referee without first clearing this with them.

If you think you might like to ask us for a reference after you have stopped volunteering, please keep copies of any Volunteer Agreements and make a note of the dates of volunteering. As we do not ourselves keep information on past volunteers indefinitely we ask you to understand that a reference might be dependent on your Contact still being involved with RG spaces and being personally willing to give a reference.

Equality and diversity

We value our volunteers for the help they can give RG spaces. What are important therefore are the skills and willingness a volunteer can bring to their role. Our policy is therefore not to ask you for information that is not relevant to your proposed role.

We may need to ask you to fill in an equality/diversity form for monitoring purposes but the information is not linked to your personal data on our system. Volunteers must abide by our Equality Policy which can be found on our website.

If you do not have access to the internet or an email address but feel you would like to contribute as a volunteer, do get in touch and we will discuss whether we can set up alternative means of communication and working with you. We regret however that due to costs we are not normally able to fund personal equipment or internet connection for use at home.

Very often, volunteering roles can be undertaken at flexible times to suit the volunteer and we will always try our best to accommodate personal preferences and changes in circumstance. However, there are some roles which may need a volunteer to work in a certain place and/or at a certain time. Such requirements will be stated in the Volunteer Agreement or made clear by your Contact.

Health and Safety

While volunteers might not come under all the regulations pertaining in law to an employee, we expect them to follow the same health and safety policies where relevant, practicable or required by law. Our Health and Safety Policy can be found on our website.

Volunteers are particularly asked to note that they may be undertaking their volunteer roles at premises which are controlled by a third party. Volunteers should ensure they are familiar with any policies pertaining to the area they are working in. This is something you main Contact should discuss with you on induction, or if your place of volunteering alters.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you may be privy to confidential information. For example, a volunteer administrator may need to handle CVs sent in by others. Your volunteer agreement will underline the need to keep confidential information safe. You may not to use it other than the purpose for which it was collected and for which it has been given to you.

You may be given, or otherwise find out, username/passwords or keys giving access to data and filing systems. You may use these only for your agreed tasks and may not pass them on to others without specific agreement from your Contact.

RG spaces' Data Protection Policy can be found on the website. If you have any uncertainty as to how it applies to you, any worries about possible breaches of confidence or how you should process data you must discuss this with your main Contact. In some instances, for example when you will have access to data where breaches of confidentiality could materially affect RG spaces' or the organisations and people it is working with, you may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.