

Escape Arts Volunteer Policy

1. Definitions

A **volunteer** is someone who spends time doing any non-compulsory, unpaid activity which is of benefit to others. Volunteers (casual or regular) shall not be considered employees of Escape Arts, neither will they be required to take on responsibilities which should only be given to paid members of staff. Volunteers will be required to undertake duties in a range of areas to assist in their personal development. Volunteers are not contracted by Escape Arts, and never receive payment for their volunteering, be this in kind or monetary. Volunteers will be reimbursed any out-of-pocket expenses incurred through their volunteering activities, such as travel costs.

2. Statement of Policy

Escape Arts believes that volunteers are vital to the organisation and the connection with local communities. A big part of the volunteer role at Escape Arts is creating and maintaining those connections with local communities. Volunteers, employees, freelance workers and the Escape Arts Board of Trustees work in partnership to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Escape Arts welcomes volunteers in a range of roles within the organisation. We recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make in helping us in our mission and objectives to provide high quality and high impact participatory arts opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

Escape Arts seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure our services meet the needs of our participants
- Provide new skills and perspectives
- Increase our contact with the local communities we serve
- Broaden experience of volunteers to enable them to move on into training, education and employment
- Add value to project outcomes and increase the charity's fundraising capacity.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all volunteers and all staff who will be working with volunteers.

Escape Arts Board of Trustees supports the use of volunteers and through its managers will ensure:

- That volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure enabling them to contribute effectively to its work; will not be used to replace and reduce the work of paid employees.
- That paid employees at all levels will work positively with volunteers in line with our *Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy* and, where appropriate, will seek to involve

them in their work where capacity allows, and a meaningful role can be developed; and that can lead to personal development. Employees will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing access to relevant training for them to do their work effectively.

- The overall responsibility for volunteers rests with the CEO/Deputy CEO. However, the day-to-day management rests with designated managers and the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Escape Arts invests in volunteering and its volunteers and will provide training, support and advice to volunteers.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitments

Escape Arts is an inclusive organisation, committed to providing equal opportunities including in the recruitment, training and development of employees/volunteers, and to proactively tackling and eliminating discrimination. Escape Arts are committed to promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work. Volunteers will receive a copy of Escape Arts' Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and undertake training on this policy as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to have and demonstrate an understanding and commitment to this policy. For more information, see Escape Arts Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.

5. Expectations, Responsibilities & Opportunities

Escape Arts expects its volunteers to be realistic in their commitment and volunteers are expected to give as much or as little time as they consider is appropriate to them. However, once a commitment is made Escape Arts expects its volunteers to fulfil this unless arranged otherwise. Volunteers will not start their volunteering role until two references and a DBS check (where required) are received.

Volunteers will be given a full induction on appointment, covering topics such as the history of Escape Arts, our current team/project delivery and summaries of Escape Arts key policies, all of which will be tailored to their individual volunteer role. Refresher training will be held where appropriate to coincide with when key policies are updated.

Volunteers will be supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator, who will hold regular check-ins with each volunteer to discuss their role and progress.

All employees will be fully informed about the rights and responsibilities of volunteers as part of their own induction and through the approved working practices of Escape Arts.

Volunteers are encouraged to represent their views to management on all aspects of our organisation's work through any written or verbal communication, including volunteer meetings and individual volunteer reviews. In all areas not related to conditions of paid employment, volunteers will be covered by all the provisions of other Escape Arts policies.

If at all possible, opportunities will be provided for changing and/or upgrading volunteer responsibilities as desired by the volunteer and appropriate to the organisation through the review system.

6. Recruitment, Selection and Signposting

Escape Arts believes that volunteering should be open to all and welcomes applications from anyone who wishes to volunteer. Once an enquiry is made by a prospective volunteer, they are invited for an interview and chat with the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss their interest and Escape Arts volunteering opportunities. This will help identify how best their skills, suitability and potential may be matched to appropriate volunteering roles.

If both parties are happy to proceed, an application form featuring two referees will be completed and a further meeting will be carried out to outline the volunteer agreement, followed by an induction.

If the prospective volunteer's application fails to meet the criteria of the appropriate Escape Arts volunteer post or if no other suitable volunteer vacancy within Escape Arts is available at any point during this process, the prospective volunteer will be signposted to the local Volunteer Centre to register for any suitable vacancies with other organisations. The prospective volunteer can be signposted directly by the Volunteer Coordinator to local representatives from Warwickshire CAVA, who can provide the prospective volunteer with a range of organisations and opportunities.

7. Volunteer Tasks/Role Descriptions

There will be a specified range of tasks that volunteers will be required to undertake. All volunteers will receive a digital Volunteer Induction Pack (updated annually by the Volunteer Coordinator). All volunteers will be given clear guidelines and instructions for their tasks volunteering with Escape Arts. The Volunteer Coordinator updates volunteer tasks and role descriptions based on Escape Arts needs, including volunteer recruitment consultation with the Escape Arts team and feedback from volunteers during supervisions about how to improve and develop their role.

8. Confidentiality, Security and Data Protection

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as employees. This states that Escape Arts cannot promise confidentiality and must consider the safety and wellbeing of all staff, participants and volunteers and will take steps to ensure this if necessary. This policy is particularly relevant for volunteers working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. Additional support is provided to volunteers who are concerned by anything of this nature that they experience whilst volunteering with Escape Arts. *For more information, see Escape Arts Confidentiality Policy, Escape Arts Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and Escape Arts Children & Young Person's Protection Policy.*

As part of their registration with Escape Arts, all volunteers will be asked to give consent for Escape Arts to contact them with new volunteering opportunities, promotional information and to be placed on our mailing list for Escape Arts updates. This will allow volunteers to be kept up to date with the latest information about Escape Arts and events they can attend and be a part of. This consent will be given on their application form, where they will be asked to sign and check a box to confirm that they agree to these terms. Photography consent for promotional purposes is also requested here.

The information collected on the Volunteer Application Form and Registration form is digitally stored on Escape Arts' CRM system, Upshot. This information can only be accessed by relevant members of the Escape Arts team, such as the Volunteer Coordinator and Project Coordinator. We will review this information with volunteers every two years. If a volunteer has not engaged in services for two years, we will remove their information from our database. *For more information on how long we store information for, see Escape Arts Data Retention Policy.*

In compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation Act (GDPR, 2021), all volunteers will be made aware that they have the right to be removed from our database and mailing list at any time. Volunteers also have the right to request what personal information Escape Arts has stored about them and can ask that it is destroyed/deleted at their request. Escape Arts can guarantee that all volunteers personal information will not be distributed to any third parties. *For more information on how we manage personal data, see Escape Arts GDPR Policy.*

9. Training

Appropriate training for volunteers will be identified through individual training plans during the induction and in reviews with the Volunteer Coordinator. These could be training courses offered in kind by Escape Arts, online via Peninsula/Bright HR or with an outside provider. Where possible, training for volunteers will be offered free of charge.

10. Expenses

All volunteers will have their reasonable and properly incurred travel and any other approved expenses reimbursed. Normally, expenses should be claimed on the monthly "Volunteer Expenses Form", given to the volunteers by the Volunteer Coordinator which is then paid by BACS. Refreshments (e.g. tea, coffee) are provided by Escape Arts free of charge.

11. Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the insurance policy of Escape Arts whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on behalf of Escape Arts, provided this is within the boundaries of role descriptions and/or handbooks.

We will not ask volunteers to drive on behalf of Escape Arts, for example giving other volunteers lifts. If a volunteer chooses to provide other volunteers with a lift in the car, this is their choice and is not covered by Escape Arts insurance policy.

12. Health and Safety

All volunteers are covered by the Escape Arts Health and Safety Policy and will receive a copy of this as part of their induction. The Health & Safety aspect of the volunteer induction focuses on health and safety information specific to volunteer roles and what they need to know if faced with an emergency whilst engaging in volunteering with Escape Arts.

In the event of a health emergency such as Covid-19 affecting Escape Arts operations, volunteers will be expected to adhere to Escape Arts' procedures, e.g. wearing face masks and social distancing. These procedures will be communicated to the volunteer prior to attending any face-to-face project activity and volunteers must sign a written agreement confirming they understand the procedures and their responsibilities prior to any face-to-face activity taking place.

13. Volunteers and E-Safety

Escape Arts encourage staff, volunteers and participants to make appropriate use of technologies. Escape Arts is committed to embracing new learning pathways and technologies. However, it is also important that we balance this with our duties of care to our participants and staff regardless of race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, social economic and human rights and be particularly mindful of vulnerable groups.

Escape Arts is committed to ensuring that all staff and participants, including vulnerable adults, children and young people within its remit of care will be able to use existing and well as up-and-coming technologies safely.

WhatsApp & Social Media:

Escape Arts uses Project WhatsApp groups to keep staff, volunteers & participants connected outside of project sessions. Project WhatsApp groups can be defined as groups set up for Escape Arts weekly projects, such as Stratford Escape and Nuneaton Escape, with both staff members and participants.

All volunteers must sign the Escape Arts WhatsApp Group Code of Conduct prior to being added an Escape Arts WhatsApp group. To ensure compliance with the Escape Arts General Data Protection Policy, this allows staff, volunteers & participants to give consent to sharing their phone number with other group members and agreeing not to share this information outside of the group. Volunteers are not permitted to contact participants in a private chat on WhatsApp.

Escape Arts advises that personal invitations from volunteers to participants on social media (or vice versa) are not permitted. No invitation or acceptance of invitations from participants within the project under the age of 18 will be sanctioned.

Online Sessions:

Escape Arts uses online video conference servers such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, meet with community groups when sessions are unable to take place face-to-face. Escape Arts recognises Zoom as a useful tool to communicate and keep participants connected when they cannot meet in person, but guidance is in place to safeguard staff, volunteers and participants during these sessions:

- Any young person under 18 years of age must have written consent prior from a parent/guardian prior to joining an online call.
- There must be at least two members of Escape Arts staff present on every online call. This is particularly important when meeting with young people under the age of 18 online.
- If an online session is being recorded or a photograph is being taken during a session, written consent must be provided prior to the recording of the session (*please see Appendix 2*).
- All group members must be reminded of the Escape Arts Project Code of Conduct and ensure everyone is treated equally and with respect when meeting online.

For more information on how we support E-Safety with our communities, see the Escape Arts Child Protection Policy and Escape Arts Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy.

14. Support and Supervision

All volunteers will be supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator. They will agree objectives with the volunteer, recognising positive efforts and offering guidance for strengthening areas of weakness. The Volunteer Coordinator will speak with each volunteer informally on a monthly basis to check in, with more detailed supervision to discuss progress, goals and feedback every three months.

15. Timesheets

Recording volunteer hours is extremely valuable for a variety of purposes; most importantly it increases recognition within the organisation of volunteer contribution. In addition to this, it can be used externally for “match funding” in funding bids. A cumulative record of volunteers’ hours will be kept on a monthly basis by the Volunteer Coordinator. This will include voluntary hours clocked by staff and corporate partners.

16. Retirement/Termination of Volunteering

The principle underlying retirement/termination of volunteering will depend on the tasks the volunteer undertakes and the individual’s continuing fitness to perform the task. The task description will be reviewed at supervision sessions with the Volunteer Coordinator to ensure that both the volunteer’s and Escape Arts objectives are being met. Should a volunteer have any concerns or issues, then this should be raised in the first instance with the Volunteer Coordinator in accordance with the procedure detailed in their Volunteer Induction pack. Similarly, any complaints or problems associated with individual will be investigated in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Volunteer Induction pack.

If the volunteer is no longer able to fulfil the volunteering role, an alternative role should be sought for the volunteer, with the volunteer’s agreement. If a suitable alternative within Escape Arts is not available, an interview should be arranged with their local Volunteer Centre or local connections within Warwickshire CAVA in an effort to locate a new volunteer opportunity.

Any volunteer can retire or terminate their role with Escape Arts at any time. Whilst there is no obligation for a volunteer to give notice, the charity requests a minimum notice of 4 weeks to allow us time to fill the vacant volunteer role.

17. Monitoring of Volunteer Policy

Escape Arts will review this policy every two years with the HR Sub-Committee and the Board of Trustees. Volunteers and paid employees will be invited to contribute to the review of this Policy.

Agreed and adopted by the Board of Trustees – Date: October 2025

To be reviewed every two years

Next date for review – Date: October 2027