

Grower Mentor Volunteering Policy

This policy applies to volunteer Grower Mentors engaged in the Grow Shetland project.

1.1 Introduction.

Grow Shetland is a three year project run by Transition Turrieffield to support individuals, groups, schools and communities to grow more of their own food. Grower Mentors are a key part of the project, supporting less experienced growers in their local communities.

Transition Turrieffield was set up as a not for profit, Community Interest Company in 2011. Our aim is to increase the amount of fresh local food produced in Shetland and help reduce the amount we import. We do this to help the community cut its food related carbon footprint, reduce the community contribution to climate change, and increase access to high quality food to benefit individual's health. To do this we:

- Provide the community with fresh locally grown produce using sustainable farming methods.
- Encourage and support individuals to grow their own produce using sustainable methods.
- Encourage community participation in local food production through involvement with Transition Turrieffield; other growing groups throughout Shetland and as part of our volunteer Grower Mentor scheme.
- Develop and use sustainable farming methods which reduce the use of, and reliance on, fossil fuels.
- Run events which raise individual and community awareness of environmental and health issues, arising from food production and consumption.

Most, but not all of the produce we grow is sold direct to consumers through our veg box scheme, reducing food miles in delivery and customer travel. We further reduce fossil fuel use by using organic methods of production. Although the croft is not registered organic, our produce is grown without the use of pesticides and agrochemicals, using permaculture principles wherever possible; working with the soil and seasons to get the best out of the land without harming natural ecosystems.

Transition Turrieffield also provides training and education on many subjects, from growing in Shetland, to reducing carbon emissions; practical polytunnel building, to understanding compost production. We deliver courses and workshops, host visits, school trips and open days.

Most of all we are committed to promoting local food and involving the community in our work. Many of our customers have supported our work since we started, and a great number volunteer with us on a regular basis. Not only do our supporters enable us to continue to grow food for the local community, they also create a significant community which is involved with local food production.

There are regular volunteering opportunities to work alongside us and learn more about everything we do.

- A volunteer is anyone who, without recompense, performs an activity at the direction and on behalf of Transition Turrieffield. Volunteers may be involved in a range of activities, including as Grower Mentors with individuals and groups in their own communities throughout Shetland.
- In this organisation volunteers are a major resource and make a vital contribution to our vision. We intend to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement in our service within all appropriate departments, programmes and activities. Volunteers bring new skills and perspectives to the organisation and can undertake activities that would not otherwise be carried out. Volunteers will supplement the service provided rather than supplant the work of employees. They will not be asked to carry out activities of such a nature as to deprive employees of any component of their work that would compromise their career development or job satisfaction.
- Transition Turrieffield believes our relationship with our volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment, within which Transition Turrieffield and Volunteers both have rights and responsibilities. We hope that volunteers will enjoy their time with us and gain from it in terms of their own personal development.

1.2 Purpose of the volunteer policy.

The purpose of this policy document is to:

- Confirm Transition Turrieffield's commitment to involving volunteers.
- Recognise the contribution volunteers make to Transition Turrieffield.
- Provide a basis for the expansion of volunteer involvement.
- Provide overall support, guidance and direction to staff and volunteers.
- Establish the values and standards of Transition Turrieffield in its involvement with volunteers.
- Ensure decisions are made fairly.
- Clarify volunteer rights and status.
- Clarify the boundaries between staff and volunteers.
- Help to ensure the ongoing quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the activities carried out by volunteers.

This policy is not either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personal agreement.

Transition Turrieffield seeks to keep its policies up-to-date and reserves the right to change any aspect of the policy at any time after consultation with the relevant parties. This policy applies to all volunteer placements in Transition Turrieffield regardless of activity. Certain items may be altered if a volunteer is being placed by a sponsoring agency.

1.3 Volunteer Benefits.

Our volunteers volunteer for many different reasons; some enjoy the social side of working with people who share a similar interest, some want to learn about growing sustainable local produce; share their own knowledge and experience or have the satisfaction of knowing they have helped reduce the community carbon footprint. Others volunteer to develop their skills, or to gain new skills. We have some volunteers who come along for the benefit it brings to positive mental health.

2. Practice Guidelines.

The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers.

2.1 Recruitment.

Transition Turriemfield will recruit volunteers professionally on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding community involvement. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, disability, age, race, religion or sexual orientation in conjunction with our equal opportunities policy. The sole qualification for recruiting shall be the individuals' suitability to perform the designated assignment. The following principles apply:

- Volunteers will be recruited from various sources which include Grow Shetland promotional material, word of mouth, recruitment events, newspaper ads, social media, local community groups and institutions and through Voluntary Action Shetland.
- Grow Shetland volunteer Grower Mentors, will be given an informal interview conducted by Penny Armstrong (and the placement supervisor if different) face to face, via telephone or video conference.
- Under some circumstances Transition Turriemfield might request references for volunteers. This will be made clear prior to the induction period. References might be verbal and/or written and should be by someone who has significant knowledge of the individual.
- No short, or long term *regular* placements, or volunteer involvement will be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met.
- Trial periods will be undertaken if necessary, the length of which will be at the discretion of Penny Armstrong and Alan Robertson and agreed with the volunteer at the recruitment stage.
- In giving any volunteer a role, attention shall be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the voluntary activity.

2.2 Guidelines for Involvement (Volunteer Handbook)

All volunteer Grower Mentors will be issued with guidelines for involvement (Grower Mentor Volunteer Handbook), which outlines the arrangement between the volunteers and Transition Turriemfield. **It is not a contract of employment.**

The guidelines cover the responsibilities of Transition Turrieffield towards its Volunteers and the role of Volunteers within Transition Turrieffield. They include:

- Conduct.
- Location.
- Induction & training.
- Supervision.
- Health & Safety issues.

The Volunteer Handbook is issued electronically. Paper, or special format copies will be issued on request.

2.3 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities.

A Volunteer has a **Right** to:

- A clear Volunteering role
- Suitable instruction in the job they are undertaking, including safe handling of tools
- Access to gloves, eye protection, boots and waterproof clothing where necessary
- An opportunity to learn more about working with individuals and groups/sharing knowledge and experience/ food production/organic growing/climate change.
- The opportunity to opt in and out of volunteer activities
- Support and guidance to achieve their volunteering role
- Confidentiality
- Be respected as an individual.
- Equality of opportunity
- Insurance cover whilst undertaking volunteering activities on behalf of the Grow Shetland project
- References if they have been regularly involved with Transition Turrieffield for 6 months or more
- Access to policy and procedure documents
- A grievance procedure when required

A Volunteer has a **Responsibility** to:

- Undertake a Grower Mentor role in a capacity agreed with Transition Turrieffield
- To inform Transition Turrieffield if tasks cannot be undertaken
- Provide regular reports of activities undertaken on behalf of the Grow Shetland project
- Participate in training and regular support and supervision sessions
- Be responsible at all times, when using tools and moving around growing sites
- Seek to ensure the safety of themselves and others when undertaking volunteering activities
- Make Transition Turrieffield aware of any physical limitations they may have
- Report any personal accidents and injuries occurring as a result of their Grower Mentor role to Transition Turrieffield as soon as possible following the event
- Be supportive of Transition Turrieffield and its work
- Be prepared to work alongside others without prejudice and respect all those involved with Transition Turrieffield
- Be non-discriminatory in their relationships with others

2.4 Induction & Training.

For volunteers

All volunteers will receive a general induction covering housekeeping issues, health & safety, the nature and purpose of the organisation; the nature, operation, purposes and requirements of the volunteer Grower Mentor's role. Specific training will be provided, where required, to provide information and skills necessary to carry out their volunteering role. The training and methods for delivery of such training will be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the assignment and capabilities of the volunteer.

For members of staff

An orientation on working with volunteers as Grower Mentors will be provided to all staff.

Support, supervision and reviews

Grower Mentor will be assigned an appropriate supervisor at induction and the process of support, supervision and review process explained. Support and supervision will take place at regular intervals agreed with each Grower Mentor, but not less than every two months. Review meetings will take place not less than every 6 months.

Health & Safety.

Transition Turrieffield will ensure volunteers have the necessary skills required to carry out their assignments. Volunteer Grower Mentors will be required to assess risks to health and safety at their site of work, and use any relevant preventative or protective methods whilst undertaking their work. Volunteers will be given induction into the appropriate action in the event of an emergency whilst undertaking work as a Grower Mentor.

Child Protection.

Lone working with children under the age of 18, or protected adults **is not permitted** under any circumstances. Work with these groups can be undertaken *if the parent, carer or other adult responsible for the individual is present at all times*. This includes work in schools and applies whether or not the Grower Mentor has a current PVG check.

2.5 Communication.

Keeping volunteers informed.

Volunteer Grower Mentors are kept informed by email. They might also be contacted by text, Facebook messenger and telephone where necessary. Contact details will be kept, used and removed from the contact list, in accordance with Transition Turrieffield's Data Protection Policy.

Information about individuals or groups requiring support for growing will be passed on to the Grower Mentor living in nearest geographical area. Grower Mentors will be asked to confirm they will follow up the request and feedback the outcome of any involvement. Records of contact hours and activities must also be kept and forwarded to Penny Armstrong, or other previously agreed appropriate supervisor.

Communication with particular individuals will be used, where appropriate, for specific events or projects.

2.6 Supervision.

Each volunteer Grower Mentor will be supervised by Penny Armstrong (or other appropriate supervisor). This person will be responsible for ongoing guidance of the volunteer, and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. Support and supervision meetings be undertaken on a regular basis, but no less than every two months. This will be by a method agreed with the volunteer (face to face, telephone or video conference). Review of the volunteer role will take place at least twice a year, at six monthly intervals. This will look at any problems or issues a volunteer or their supervisor has; any other areas in which a volunteer is interested; suggestions and ideas for improving the quality of volunteering role. A written record may be kept of this review, in accordance with Transition Turrieffield's Secure Data Handling policy.

If for whatever reason the supervisor will not be available they must inform the volunteer and designate another person in case of problems. A volunteer may be a supervisor of other volunteers, provided that the supervising volunteer has a member of staff as their supervisor.

Records.

Transition Turrieffield will keep basic records of volunteer Grower Mentor involvement. To enable to successful functioning of the scheme and to provide a high quality experience for volunteers, information will be kept as appropriate and might include:

- Name, address and contact details
- Support and supervision records
- Training and development plan and progress
- Time sheets
- Expense claim forms
- Accident records
- Any issues including grievance and dismissal
- Start and end date of involvement
- Leaving interview record
- References written for other posts/roles

Grower Mentors will be required to keep a record of their time and involvement with growers they are supporting through the scheme. Records should be submitted to Transition Turrieffield regularly. The information will contribute to the evaluation of the scheme and inform reports to funders.

Volunteers' personal records shall be accorded the strictest confidentiality in accordance with data protection legislation and Transition Turrieffield's Secure Data Handling policy. Volunteers have access to their personnel file on request.

2.7 Insurance.

All volunteers are covered by Transition Turrieffield's insurance policies whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on Transition Turrieffield's behalf. Transition Turrieffield holds employers and public liability insurance which covers volunteers aged 16+.

2.8 Expenses.

Volunteer Grower Mentors can claim mileage at a rate of 0.45p/mile for travel to and from growing sites where they are supporting other growers, and training events relating to their role. Volunteer expense forms must be completed and submitted to Transition Turrieffield. Expenses will be paid in arrears and by a method agreed with the volunteer beforehand.

2.9 Resignation.

Volunteer Grower Mentors can give up their role at any time. This information should be passed on to their supervisor. Ideally volunteers would consider a short notice period to allow a replacement to be found, where possible. If practicable, an exit interview and evaluation should be conducted to help inform the functioning of the scheme.

3 Complaints and Grievance.

If a volunteer Grower Mentor has a genuine complaint they should discuss it with their supervisor in the first instance. If they are unhappy with the outcome, or if the complaint is about their supervisor, they should discuss it with a Member of the Board of Directors who will try to resolve the issue. If a supervisor has concerns about a volunteer's behaviour or their ability to carry out their assignment they should discuss their concerns with the volunteer in the first instance. If this does not resolve the situation a member of the Board of Directors will be brought in to mediate.

If the volunteer Grower Mentor wishes to initiate grievance procedure in relation to their volunteering they should, in the first instance, outline the issues in writing to Transition Turrieffield staff by letter or email. Should the grievance concern members of staff, the information should be submitted in writing, by letter or email, to the Board of Directors. The appropriate address, or email address, will be made available on request.

A response to the concern will be provided, in writing, within 10 days of receipt.

All discussions whether complaint or grievance, should be documented and the volunteer should be informed of any action taken in writing.

4 Evaluation.

Regular evaluation of the involvement of volunteer Grower Mentors in the Grow Shetland project by will be conducted by Transition Turrieffield and used as part of the review of the scheme. Volunteers will be consulted as part of the evaluation.

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