



# A VOLUNTEER CHARTER

10 Principles for assuring  
legitimacy and preventing  
exploitation of workers  
and volunteers

## Why do we need this Charter?

This Charter updates the existing joint STUC Volunteer Scotland Charter to take account of a new context and the expressed need and demand for clear and unambiguous principles for assuring volunteer legitimacy and preventing exploitation. The key goal is to ensure good relations between workers and volunteers, and to ensure that other stakeholders achieve consensus on the validity of volunteer roles.

## What do we mean by volunteering?

The **values** that underpin this charter are:

- recognising people as assets - not a commodity
- building on people's skills and experience
- promoting reciprocity, mutual respect and trust
- building and supporting strong social networks

The **characteristics** of volunteering based on the United Nations definition are;

**Mutual support/self-organising** - where we meet our shared needs together in associational life.

**Formal service** - normally through 3rd parties with agreed roles and responsibilities and management arrangements (the charter principles are especially relevant here).

**Civic participation and campaigning** - such as youth forums, political movements, and public service decision-making.

The **principles** of volunteering - are that volunteer activity of any kind is undertaken with free will, is not for payment, and seeks community benefits.

## Who is this Charter for?

There are a wide number of stakeholders interested in ensuring good relations between paid workers and volunteers, including;

- Volunteer involving organisations from all sectors
- Trades Unions and workers representatives
- Funding and procurement agents
- Government
- Development Agencies and networks
- Workers and Volunteers
- Beneficiaries and communities of interest

## Where will the Charter be applied?

We envisage that this Charter will be most relevant in formal service volunteering contexts which have parallels to employment such as recruitment, management, induction, written obligations and agreed responsibilities. This is where there has been legal challenges and conflict. It's important to state that the most common volunteer experience is not in a formal role, and is centred in associational life. Volunteering is about building friendly relations, looking out for each other and coming together to do things with shared goals.

## How to use the Charter

- A principles checklist for volunteer involving organisations
- An agenda for negotiations about legitimacy, motivations, and non-discrimination
- An aid for the co-design of volunteer roles
- A tool for conflict resolution and addressing media interest.
- A test for other volunteer promotion such as on-line volunteer opportunities

## Support and advice available

On-line examples and case studies about the use of the Charter and different scenarios are available. Where there is a conflict about whether there has been a breach in the Charter that the STUC/Volunteer Scotland can be contacted for conciliation support.

Contact: [info@volunteerscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@volunteerscotland.org.uk)



**Dave Moxham** Deputy General Secretary STUC



**Rhona Harper** Chair Volunteer Scotland

## 1st Principle

Any volunteer activity is a **freely made choice** of the individual. If there is any compulsion, threat of sanctions or force, then any such activity is not volunteering.

## 2nd Principle

Volunteers should receive no financial reward for their time however **out of pocket expenses should be covered**; no one should be prevented from volunteering due to their income.

## 3rd Principle

Effective structures should be put in place to **support, train and develop** volunteers and their collaboration with paid workers.

## 4th Principle

Volunteers and paid workers should be able to carry out their duties in **safe, secure and healthy environments** that are free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence and discrimination.

## 5th Principle

Volunteers should not carry out duties formerly carried out by paid workers nor should they be used to disguise the effects of non-filled vacancies or cuts in services.

## 6th Principle

Volunteers should not be used instead of paid workers or undercut their pay and conditions of service nor undertake the work of paid workers during industrial disputes.

## 7th Principle

Volunteers should not be used to reduce contract costs nor be a replacement for paid workers in competitive tenders or procurement processes.

## 8th Principle

Volunteers should not be used to bypass minimum wage legislation nor generate profit for owners.

## 9th Principle

Volunteers and paid workers should be given the opportunity to contribute to the development and monitoring of volunteering policies and procedures, including the need for policies that resolve any issues or conflicts that may arise.

## 10th Principle

Volunteer roles should be designed and negotiated around the **needs and interests of volunteers**, involving organisations and wider stakeholders. Finding legitimacy and avoiding exploitation through consensus depends on mutual trust and respect.