

Growing Support Volunteer Handbook





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Welcome to the Volunteer Handbook. We're very happy that you've chosen to volunteer with us and hope that you will enjoy the work that you do.

This handbook will provide you with a guide to being a Growing Support Volunteer. It will act as a basis for your initial training and we hope it will be a useful reference point in the future. If there is anything within the handbook that you don't understand, or you would like further information about, please contact Growing Support.

You can contact us by email or by telephone:

volunteers@growingsupport.co.uk

07581 281 578

We are a small, new organisation and some of us are volunteers too, so we'll get back to you as soon as we can, but it might not always be immediately.

Aim

Growing Support provides social and therapeutic horticultural activities that improve the health and wellbeing, and reduce social isolation, of people with health or and social care needs, in particular older people and older people with dementia.

To enable us to achieve our aims, we believe in involving volunteers. Volunteers help us extend our reach and impact the lives of even more people, bring new skills and perspectives to our work and allow us to work more closely with local communities.

Volunteers are integral to what we do and we value your contribution and the strengthening effect it has on our work. We are committed to recruiting and training as many diverse volunteers as possible and creating an environment where all our volunteers are able to fulfil their potential, maximise their contribution and feel comfortable in being themselves.

Growing Support expects the organisations we work with to actively involve volunteers and to enable you to carry out your role to the best of your ability. We will provide support to those organisations to help them to do this.

Project Introduction

Older people living in care homes are twice as likely to experience loneliness as those living in the community. We use social and therapeutic horticulture to engage people in personalised activities that are meaningful for them. Research shows that this approach can improve the health and quality of life of everyone involved.

We work alongside volunteers, professionals and carers in care homes and in the community to deliver social and therapeutic horticulture activity sessions. These sessions are designed to combine purposeful physical activity with social interaction and mental stimulation in a safe and fun environment, reducing loneliness and isolation.

We tailor the sessions according to the needs of our clients, but they will usually look as follows:

- Around eight participants for one hour
- Mostly outdoors (but indoors if the weather or a client's needs require this)
- Using flowers and plants to encourage sensory stimulation and reminiscence
- Use of adapted tools and activities according to the physical and mental health of the participants
- Individual support to take part in group exercises, providing social interaction and fun!

Typical activities include planting seeds, potting up plants, watering flowers, harvesting vegetables or making fat balls for the birds.

Your Role

As a volunteer, you will be a bridge between the organisation you are working with (typically a care home) and the community in which it is sited; we hope that your work will have a very positive impact there. We could not impact so many older people without the fantastic commitment from our volunteers – so we are always truly grateful for all of your support.

We hope that volunteers will be fully involved in Growing Support and will undertake to respect the guidelines set out in the Volunteer Agreement. This is a two-way document which lays out what Growing Support expects from you and what you should expect of us and the organisation with which you are placed.

Your role will be with Growing Support at the home or community group at which we are working. In most of our sessions you will work with a trained Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Therapist on an outreach basis, bringing the health and wellbeing benefits of getting outside and gardening to some of the most vulnerable and socially isolated people in

our community. In some homes, after a successful induction period, you will be able to work independently alongside care staff to support service users in gardening activities.

The following is the **Volunteer Role Description**:

Role Title: Social and Therapeutic Gardening Volunteer

Responsible to: Growing Support Directors

Location: Various around Bristol and South Gloucestershire (Stockwood / Brentry / Bedminster / Westbury-on-Trym / Winterbourne / Thornbury) – to be agreed with volunteer

Times / Days: morning or afternoon on Tuesday or Wednesday

Main Aim: To work with and support a group of older people and people with dementia in residential care / day care settings in and around Bristol to develop and maintain a therapeutic garden.

Experience:

ESSENTIAL:

- To be compassionate, respectful and able to relate to vulnerable people
- Excellent communicator and ability to adapt the way you communicate to meet the needs of different client groups
- To be able to act on own initiative
- To be reliable and committed to regularly attending a session
- To be willing to have a DBS check and provide 2 references

DESIRABLE:

- Experience of supporting vulnerable people who have health or social care needs (at home or at work)
- Some personal or professional experience of caring for or supporting people who have dementia
- Basic gardening knowledge and skills - you **do not** need to be an expert
- Passion for or an interest in growing, nature or wildlife

MAIN TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To be available for 2 hours, once a week, on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday (morning or afternoon).
2. To be able to travel independently to one of the care homes or day services we work with (travel expenses will be reimbursed).
3. To commit to volunteering in the role, wherever possible, for a minimum of six months.
4. To attend an initial induction and training session held in Bristol.
5. To attend quarterly volunteer meetings held in Bristol.
6. To work with and support service users, of care homes or day care services we work with, to be involved in developing their own therapeutic garden.

7. To be enthusiastic about gardening and enable users to get involved in as many garden tasks and activities as they want or are able to.
8. To offer companionship and a listening ear to users of the garden.
9. To be willing to share your knowledge and skills in the garden, as well as to listen and learn from those of service users.
10. To contribute to the debriefing sessions with Growing Support staff after gardening activities and contribute to monitoring when required.
11. To carry out the responsibilities of the role with full regard to the Volunteer Policy.
12. To stay in touch with your supervisor and provide feedback when requested.
13. To have a sense of humour and fun and ability to share this with others.
14. To provide two references, preferably including one manager who knows you from your current or past employment or volunteer experience.
15. To undertake a disclosure and barring service / DBS - formerly criminal records bureau / CRB - check before commencing the role.

How we'd like you to work

Good communication skills are an important part of this role as you are likely to be working with some people who have additional needs and who may need extra support. We want your role to be an enabling one, so that you are not doing something *for* someone, but *with* them, giving them support so that they can complete a task. This might mean that that person doesn't do something as, for example, neatly or accurately as you might be able to, but this doesn't necessarily matter. It is about helping someone achieve something that they enjoy and feel some satisfaction from doing.

If a service user asks for your help, by all means give it – as you get to know people better you will be able to judge what support is appropriate for them. Allow people to make mistakes; as long as there is no danger to the service user or others, this won't matter. You can help people make informed choices and reassure them that their contribution is valid. This role is about sharing your skills, working together and treating people with dignity and respect.

Gardening can help people in lots of ways – physically, through getting exercise and being mobile; mentally, through being outside, enjoying yourself and having a sense of achievement; socially, doing activities with other people and helping reduce isolation; and helping people gain new skills. We hope that you will help our service users attain some of these positive results and that you too will benefit in similar ways.

Your Team

You will be part of a group of committed and dynamic volunteers working towards the overall aims and objectives of Growing Support. On a day-to-day basis Growing Support will be responsible for coordinating your activities and ensuring that you have all the support and guidance you need to fulfil your role effectively. There will be a debrief at the end of

each session where you can talk about how you feel the session went, discuss any difficulties and share ideas for subsequent sessions.

Please don't be afraid to come forward and make suggestions on how we could improve things for you and the people you're working with.

Training

We will provide training to ensure you can do your work effectively and hope to provide an environment in which volunteers feel supported and valued and gain something from their contribution.

All volunteers will receive initial training from Growing Support, which will cover what to expect from the role and essential information that you need to know, such as health and safety, confidentiality, diversity, safeguarding and day-to-day issues.

Please meet Growing Support staff and other volunteers outside the home or day service when you arrive so that we can all go in together. This is to ensure that the staff don't have to keep opening the door and also because we might need help carrying in plants and tools. We will sign in when we arrive and we will take direction from the care staff in terms of fire evacuation etc.

There are links to further resources at the back of this handbook which you might want to read, with information on dementia and therapeutic gardening. If you find any other information, such as newspaper articles, you think we might be interested in, please let us know. You will also be given a CD at your initial induction session with additional Growing Support information and policies on it.

There will be an introductory period of 3 months to see whether you're comfortable with, and suitable for, the role.

Support and Supervision

Growing Support will have quarterly meetings for volunteers which we really hope you'll attend. This will be a chance to discuss your role, share ideas, meet other volunteers and plan future work. We would also like to use peer support, so if you are happy to share your email address with other volunteers, you can contact one another in relation to your Growing Support role.

Growing Support will stay in touch with volunteers, but there are constraints to that contact because of our limited resources in terms of staff time.

Volunteer Policy

We have a Volunteer Policy which any volunteer can request a copy of. The main points of it are included in this handbook.

Health and Safety

Volunteers should expect to be carrying out their role in a safe working environment; Growing Support, and the organisations you are placed with, has a duty of care towards you. Please be aware that this role can involve lifting, bending, digging and using tools.

Risk assessments will be carried out by Growing Support for all activities that we are organising and we expect the organisations who are working with volunteers to carry out their own risk assessments too. We might also want you to have some knowledge of risk assessments as part of your role, but we will give you training on this if it is needed.

We will cover health and safety in your initial training.

Safeguarding Adults

Adult safeguarding is about protecting vulnerable people aged over 18 from abuse by others. A vulnerable adult is someone who may be disabled, ill or frail and unable to care for or protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse is a violation of a person's rights and can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, psychological abuse, neglect in an institution or at home, or discriminatory behaviour. All organisations working with vulnerable adults are responsible for ensuring their safety. If you suspect any service user you are working with is at risk, you have a duty to report it. In the first instance you should contact Growing Support, unless it is an emergency. Safeguarding adults will be discussed further in your initial training.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Growing Support's insurance policy and you will also be covered by the insurance policy of the organisation where you will be carrying out your volunteering.

Diversity

Information about our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion can be found in Growing Support's Equal Opportunities Policy (volunteers are included in the scope of this policy). We are committed to working with volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds. Volunteers are also expected to have an understanding of, and commitment to, diversity. This will form part of the initial training.

Resolving problems

All volunteers will be given a Volunteer Agreement, which lays out what Growing Support expects of you and what you should expect from us and the organisation you are placed with. Although the relationship between a volunteer and Growing Support is entirely

voluntary, it is important that both sides are keeping the standards which we expect to ensure that our users are benefitting from a quality service.

The process for resolving problems, if they arise, is as follows:

- If you need to resolve a problem you should initially contact Growing Support to raise your concerns (either by speaking to your Growing Support Contact or emailing volunteers@growingsupport.co.uk).
- If this does not resolve the concern then a meeting with a Director of Growing Support may need to be organised where we will do our best to respond to concerns.
- If, after that, the situation remains unresolved and there seems to be no way to resolve it, it may be inappropriate for you to continue volunteering.

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- If Growing Support feels that a volunteer doesn't meet the standards we expect, then we will initially meet with you and explain our concerns.
- If this does not resolve the concern, then a meeting with one of the Directors of Growing Support will be organised. The volunteer can have a friend present at any of these meetings, if they would like.
- If the volunteer's work still does not meet Growing Support's standards, then the role and placement of the volunteer may be terminated.
- In the event of behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct, the role and placement of the volunteer may be terminated by Growing Support immediately.
- In all cases, the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision made and action taken.
- Growing Support will seek external advice if we feel we need additional support in dealing with a problem.

Confidentiality

We expect volunteers to adhere to the same Confidentiality Policy as paid staff. This means that you should not discuss anything of a confidential nature to anyone outside Growing Support or the organisation you are placed with. Do not feel that you can't share something that is worrying you, but use your common sense when discussing anything when you are not at your volunteer placement.

We need to protect volunteers, so you must be free to discuss any concerns you have with your supervisor. If these concerns are related to a service user who has confided in you, you

will need to tell that person that you may have to discuss what they have told you with someone else within the organisation.

Expenses

We expect volunteers to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, such as travel. You are entitled to travel expenses of up to £10 per day; the cost of public transport or 40p per mile travelled will be reimbursed. You should check with Growing Support staff before incurring any other expenses. Growing Support reserves the right not to reimburse expenses that have not been authorised in advance.

We encourage volunteers to claim expenses on a monthly basis. Expenses should be listed separately on the Growing Support Expense Form and individual receipts or details of the journeys made should be provided. Expenses forms should be handed to your Growing Support contact or emailed, with scanned copies of receipts, to volunteers@growingsupport.co.uk.

Once authorised, expenses will be paid directly into your bank account. Cash reimbursements will only be made on an exceptional basis.

Volunteer Agreement

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us and what we expect from you. We hope you enjoy volunteering with us and feel part of our team.

What you can expect from Growing Support and the organisation with which you are placed:

- The induction and training necessary for the role
- Quarterly Growing Support meetings
- The reimbursement of travel expenses (up to £10 per day), at 40p per mile / the cost of public transport
- Adequate tools and equipment to perform the role effectively and safely
- Ongoing training and support
- The opportunity to learn new skills
- The opportunity to meet other volunteers and share ideas and skills
- To be respected and treated fairly
- To be working in a safe environment

What we expect from you, the volunteer:

- To undertake any training necessary for the role
- To have read and be aware of the Growing Support Volunteer Policy
- To stay in touch with Growing Support and to communicate well
- To arrive on time and to let Growing Support know if you are unable to turn up with as much notice as possible
- To inform Growing Support if you have any problems or are concerned about anything to do with a service user
- To respect people with disabilities in their own right
- To work safely and be mindful of the safety of others
- To respect diversity and to treat people fairly
- To respect confidentiality
- To respect and be able to take instruction from Growing Support staff members
- To conduct yourself in a positive and supportive manner regarding the work of Growing Support.

If you have any ideas about things that you would like us to do for, or with, volunteers or how we can improve the way we work, please let us know.

Thank you once again for volunteering your time, we really do appreciate it!

Further reading

Social Care Institute for Excellence

Online dementia training and resources.

www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia/index.asp

Alzheimer's Society

Lots of dementia factsheets – causes, different types of dementia, emotional and practical support, health and social care, legal and financial information.

<http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=200137>

Thrive

Social and therapeutic horticulture.

<http://www.thrive.org.uk/>

Carry on Gardening:

Another Thrive resource but specifically all about making adaptations to gardening, such as using different accessible tools, to make it accessible to people with different health and social care needs.

<http://www.carryongardening.org.uk/>

The Dementia Centre at the University of Stirling

Lots of resources and information about being 'dementia-friendly'.

<http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk/about-dsdc>

Trellis

Scottish project supporting health through horticulture. Factsheet on dementia and gardening.

<http://www.trellisscotland.org.uk/dementia>

BBC article about dementia and gardening

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-14979146>