

Volunteer Policy

Engaging with volunteers

The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) works with partners to enable Scotland's young people to learn about food, farming and the working countryside through customised resources and a flexible programme of experiential learning activities.

We work with partners to deliver world class learning opportunities in and around agriculture, for Scotland's young people and teachers. These learning opportunities focus on:

- Farming and food production
- Outdoor learning for all
- The countryside - including forestry and estate management
- Raising environmental awareness
- Learning for sustainability
- Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)
- Career opportunities in the sector

Volunteer documentation

This volunteering strategy sits alongside our volunteering handbook which is a reference point for all our volunteers and provides further information around our remit, ethos and volunteer support.

Why volunteer with RHET?

Volunteering with RHET will provide you with the opportunity to share your knowledge of food, farming and the countryside with young people and teachers, helping ensure they receive balanced, non-biased information.

You will also have the opportunity to engage with like-minded people and contribute to local events focusing on food and farming education.

Why we involve volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and we are committed to supporting them.

Volunteers help us provide venues and deliver work we could not otherwise achieve and are vital in helping to educate young people about food, farming and countryside. RHET seeks to involve volunteers with the following tasks:

- Hosting farm visits
- Speaking to groups of children

- Assisting at the Royal Highland Show
- Representing RHET Countryside Initiatives at events
- Strategically guiding the organisation through committee or board engagement
- Fundraising

Vision and mission for volunteering

Our mission is to engage with all Scotland's young learners three times during their school career by 2030. Volunteers will be vital in helping us achieve this. Meaningful engagement with RHET activities will involve a pattern of three contacts with RHET over a typical pupil's school career (Early Years to Primary 4; Primary 5 to Primary 7; Secondary 1 to Secondary 6).

As an organisation, we are looking to build upon on volunteering offer as well as increasing the number and diversity of people we work with.

Thank you for volunteering with RHET - we hope you enjoy your time with us.

Our values for volunteer involvement

Our volunteering policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- The definition of a volunteer at RHET is someone who 'commits skills, life and/or work experience, time and energy to furthering the aim of the charity'. Their contribution is of value to the organisation and its users and leads to enhanced personal development, levels of skill and quality of life of individual volunteers.
- RHET's volunteers undertake their role on an unpaid basis and as a matter of personal choice.
- RHET will ensure volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to RHET's work.
- The minimum age at which anyone can volunteer for RHET or an Initiative is 16 years of age. For the purposes of this document, pupils and students undertaking unpaid curriculum based work experiences and other unpaid individuals placed by a third party organisation, with the aim of gaining appropriate experience, will be subject to the same rules and procedures as those which apply to volunteers, unless otherwise indicated.
- RHET volunteers are expected to operate in a complementary way to paid staff and not as replacements. Volunteers will not be used in any context that results in the loss of paid employment or as substitutes in the case of industrial dispute.
- RHET expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers, and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- RHET recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- RHET has the responsibility to comply with Disclosure Scotland and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Act (Scotland) 2007 and as such will undertake to check all volunteers engaging with RHET under this scheme.

Attracting volunteers

There are a number of routes through which volunteers may become involved with RHET. The following procedure should be implemented with anyone coming forward to volunteer.

1. Relevant staff member to meet the interested person
2. Discuss the various roles and opportunities
3. Provide volunteer pack including volunteering form
4. Signpost the volunteer to the [online volunteering zone](#)

All interested volunteers (including young people) need to fill out a 'Get involved' or 'Show' form and undertake an induction with the relevant person. They will also need to complete a PVG check which involves providing two forms of identification and completing a form online within a set time period. Assistance is available throughout this process.

All new volunteers are added to our database and are kept up to date with initiatives through regular e-newsletters. All volunteer data is kept within the organisation and not shared with external organisations. As part of our retention policy, all volunteer data is reviewed on an annual basis and you can request to have your details removed at any point.

We work to match suitable volunteers to the opportunities we have available and if after talking to the volunteer, we decide they are not suitable for the role, we will feedback to them and if appropriate signpost them to alternative opportunities.

Volunteer role descriptions

All volunteers are provided with a role outline. This sets out the necessary skills, attitude, experience and availability to carry out the role. The role description is not intended to form a basis for employment in any way. Our roles are open to all interested individuals and volunteering does not exclude anyone from claiming benefits (correct at July 2019).

The key roles we currently have are:

- Farm visit hosts
- Committee members
- Committee chairs
- Board members
- Classroom speakers
- Event volunteers
- Royal Highland Show Education volunteers

We also provide a volunteer charter which outlines the mutual responsibilities of RHET and volunteers (in our associated [handbook](#)).

Volunteers will always have staff support and can refuse demands that are considered unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or that they do not have the skills to carry out.

Young person volunteers

A young person is classified as being under 18 years of age. Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 are welcome as event volunteers. Where applicable we will seek parental permission before engagement.

There are ways that young people can be recognised for any volunteering they do for example through Young Scot or Duke of Edinburgh and RHET supports these initiatives.

Positive induction and training

All volunteers will receive full information about RHET and their chosen area of volunteering. Training will be provided as appropriate. RHET values the contribution volunteers give to the organisation and has a training programme which volunteers can opt into. All information and training opportunities are shared via our regular [newsletters](#) and through our [volunteering portal](#).

Support

All volunteers will have a designated person as their main point of contact. They should provide regular supervision of the volunteer and feedback on progress, discussing future development and airing any problems.

We want volunteering with us to be a positive experience for you. As such, if you need references from us to help you please let us know.

All volunteers will also have access to training opportunities throughout the year.

Expenses

RHET is a charity and volunteer expenses are not routinely covered, at local or national level, except under agreed circumstances.

The volunteer's voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning RHET and its work. Volunteers can raise issues through their designated support person or directly to the Countryside Initiative committee.

RHET holds a Countryside Initiative forum at least three times per year which volunteers are welcome to attend (subject to invitation). This meeting covers all issues pertinent to the countryside initiatives and volunteers. They take place at various venues and all Coordinators and Chairpersons of Area Countryside Initiatives attend.

Many volunteer activities involve a formal evaluation procedure consisting of a questionnaire or a multiple-choice sheet. This feedback enables us to improve the volunteering experience.

Insurance

Volunteers of unincorporated Countryside Initiatives, are covered by RHET's insurance policy whilst they are engaged in any work on RHET's behalf.

Volunteers of incorporated Countryside Initiatives are covered by the individual Countryside Initiatives insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on the Countryside Initiatives behalf.

Equal opportunities

RHET operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers (appendix 2). Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of and commitment to our equal opportunities policy.

Health and safety

RHET's Health and Safety Policy covers all volunteers. This file is held centrally and can be viewed upon request (appendix 3 RHET Health and Safety Policy Statement).

All activities that volunteers are involved with have a risk assessment completed for them (with the exception of farm speaker sessions where the risks are small and very variable). Volunteers need to see and sign off the risk assessment to confirm that they are aware of the risks.

Confidentiality

Due to the nature of the RHETs work, volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff or contractors. That is, volunteers are required to keep confidential, both during the course of their volunteering and after, all information gained in the course of their volunteering about the business of RHET or the Countryside Initiative, and that of any young people, except in circumstances in which they are required to disclose information in law or in the course of the performance of their duties with RHET and/ or the Countryside Initiative.

Social media

Where volunteers use social media whilst on RHET sessions, they are under the same requirements for confidentiality as staff. They should remain respectful to the organisation, staff, other volunteers and clients. Volunteers require staff authorisation to take images on sessions to ensure all permissions are in place. All images of young people taken at events should be shared with your local project co-ordinator and deleted from personal devices within 7 days of the images being taken, all private accounts should be separate from those within the organisation.

Photography

Photographs are a valuable tool to record activities. Volunteers need to speak to their coordinator regarding photos, as appropriate permissions need to be in place. Photos should be taken with the purpose of promoting RHET and all photos need to be e-mailed to RHET and deleted from personal devices within 7 days.

Problem solving

All volunteers are asked to please first discuss any problems with their named contact who will attempt to resolve the matter within five days. If the volunteer feels unable to approach their named contact or the matter is not looked into they can approach the RHET Executive Officer (appendix 5 problem solving).

There are three areas we consider around volunteering in challenging volunteer situations:

- Capability: a volunteer's ability to undertake the role
- Performance: how well a volunteer is performing the role
- Conduct: behaviour when taking part in volunteering.

Appendix 1 Volunteer Charter

We hope you enjoy your time volunteering with RHET. Volunteering is a mutual partnership with roles and responsibilities from each side.

Responsibility of RHET

We will:

- give details of the volunteer role
- check your identification and undertake a PVG check
- explain the benefits of the volunteer role to the organisation
- outline the commitment required as a volunteer
- undertake risk assessments for RHET activities
- state the location where the volunteering will take place
- state the start date for the volunteering
- provide a named contact for each volunteer, with regular support meetings
- outline what you hope for from the volunteer and what the volunteer can expect from your RHET

We are committed to

- providing a full induction and any training required for the volunteer
- providing appropriate supervision, support and flexibility
- treating volunteers in line with the organisations equality and diversity policy
- providing insurance cover
- implementing good health and safety practice
- addressing any problems that may arise during the course of your volunteering.

Responsibility of the volunteer:

RHET is looking for the following from you as a volunteer:

- perform your role to their best ability
- provide balanced information which is unbiased and encourages engagement with the industry
- follow the organisation's volunteer policies and procedures, including Health and Safety
- take responsibility for equality and diversity in relation to staff, volunteers and young people and partners they may work with
- maintain the confidentiality of the organisation and of its clients, customers or service users
- provide reasonable notice if you opt to stop volunteering

Appendix 2 RHET Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

RHET is committed to providing a working environment in which all employees, contractors and volunteers are able to realise their full potential and to contribute to the trusts' success irrespective of their gender, race or disability. This is a key value to which all employees, contractors and volunteers are expected to give their support.

In order to create conditions in which this goal can be realised, RHET is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, procedures and attitudes throughout the organisation.

RHET expects employees, contractors and volunteers to support this commitment and to assist in its realisation in all possible ways.

Specifically, RHET aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant or volunteer is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or racial origins, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, disability or offending background.

Equal opportunities practice is developing constantly as social attitudes and legislation change. RHET will keep its policies under review and implement changes where these could improve equality of opportunity. This commitment applies to all of RHET's policies and procedures, not just those specifically connected with equal opportunity.

Appendix 3 Health and Safety Policy Statement

It is the duty of all staff, contractors and volunteers to ensure that safety and health factors are considered fully when carrying out or changing processes or procedures. Staff, contractors and volunteers will be adequately trained. This includes being made fully aware of hazards while carrying out RHET activities and highlighting Regulations and Codes of Practice pertaining to safety and health.

It is also the duty of all in authority to ensure that the necessary safety precautions are taken and that the necessary safety instructions are given.

Notwithstanding these duties, it is also recognised that all staff, contractors and volunteers have a responsibility for all personal safety and also a duty of care to their other staff, contractors, volunteers and children.

This responsibility includes:

- (a) The duty to comply with any safety instructions and directions laid down.
- (b) The duty to use properly the means and facilities provided for safety and health at work.
- (c) The duty to refrain from the wilful misuse or interference with anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare and any action that might endanger any person.
- (d) The full Health and Safety policy is available from RHET.

Volunteers involved with farm visits will work in partnership with RHET coordinators to undertake risk assessments prior to visits.

All volunteers will be briefed prior to events and any risks will be highlighted. A copy of any risk assessments will be available for all events. A briefing sheet is provided.

Appendix 4 Key Principles of Child Protection

The key principles of child protection are seen within the wider context of supporting families and meeting children's needs through Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).

- the best interests of the child or young person must always be a primary consideration;
- all children and young people should be treated fairly and with dignity and respect;
- all children and young people have the right to protection from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- all children and young people have the right to express their views on matters that affect them.

The full Child Protection Policy is available from RHET. We also undertake background record checks using the PVG scheme on all our volunteers prior to engaging with children on behalf of RHET.

Appendix 5 Problem solving

As a volunteer we aim to resolve any issues amicably and as soon as possible. We will put the following procedure in place to solve any problems which may arise:

Informal process

1. We aim to have regular communication with volunteers.
2. When issues arise, the Countryside Initiative should meet with the volunteer as soon as possible to ask what their view on the situation is. This is to establish the facts surrounding the issue and agree with the volunteer what they are expected to do in order to address this, the timeframe for improvements and for any follow up meetings.
3. By meeting with the volunteer, what initially seems to be a serious problem may highlight a training requirement. Volunteers might not realise that something they are doing is a cause for concern, particularly if guidance or policy has changed since they joined the organisation.
4. It can be difficult to give constructive feedback or raise issues, but a volunteer cannot be expected to improve or change the way they work if an issue has not been discussed with them. Often they will not be aware they have done something wrong and will want to improve.
5. If, after the agreed time, informal procedures do not bring a positive change, the Countryside Initiative will initiate the formal process.

Formal process

If it is not possible to resolve issues using informal procedures then a more formal process can be implemented. This process will begin sooner where gross misconduct occurs.

1. Initial complaints should go to the Countryside Initiative and if the matter is not sorted out at this stage, then both parties should have the option to refer to the RHET Executive Officer.
2. Volunteers have the option of having a friend along to any meetings as part of this process.
3. Any decisions, that are jointly agreed between on how to resolve the situation should be written down and communicated to the volunteer either in writing or via email.
4. If a volunteer has to leave as a result of these proceedings, we will let them know as soon as possible, during a face to face meeting if practical, and followed up in writing. The relevant members of staff and volunteers should be made aware of the situation.
5. In extreme circumstances a volunteer may be asked to leave with, or without, notice. This is reserved for cases of gross misconduct.