

Getting Started

A how-to guide for setting up and running an Open Spaces Volunteering Group



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Open Spaces Volunteering Handbook Part 1 (2022/23)

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Foreword



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Enhancing and protecting our natural and built environment is a key priority for South Gloucestershire Council. Through the Council Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy, we recognise the role high quality public open spaces play in improving the wellbeing of people living and working in our communities, as well as their importance to help combat the climate and nature emergency.

Your work, as volunteers, provides vital support, not just to communities across our area, but to the Council itself, enabling us to ensure South Gloucestershire is a great place to live, work and visit.

This Volunteering Handbook and the additional support the council can provide, such as training and networking opportunities, aims to empower individuals and groups to improve their local public open spaces for the benefit of the wider community and local wildlife.

Thank you for taking time to care for your local community space

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Welcome

The Open Spaces Volunteering Handbook

The Open Spaces Volunteering Handbook has been designed for volunteers helping care for public open spaces in South Gloucestershire. Whether just starting out, managing an established group, or embarking on a new project or phase, these guides are here to help you with essential information as well as how to access additional support through the Council and where to find other external resources.

There are 2 parts presented as standalone documents:

Getting Started

Working On-Site

There are also a number of themed guides in development which will expand this resource to cover particular topics.

The Handbook is backed up by advice from the Community Spaces Place Improvements Team who are part of StreetCare (within Place Operations) and provide support to the many Friends groups, Conservation groups, Community Orchards and others which form the Community Spaces Network.

You can find out more at The Hive <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/thehive>

If you would like to do more for your local park or open space, contact the Community Spaces team. Email: GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk

Part 1: Getting started

This section of the Open Spaces Volunteering Handbook covers the basics of how to set up a group, advice on publicity and community engagement and developing skills and knowledge in your groups. The guide sets out to answer the most common questions asked by Open Spaces Volunteer groups on the admin and management aspects of running a group.

Who is it for?

You may be a local resident keen to start caring for a piece of open space and looking for others to join you, a group with a vision for a local green space and taking the next steps to make it happen, or a volunteer in an established Open Spaces Volunteer group taking on new responsibilities.

In recent times many more people have become passionate about the public open spaces all around us, the role they play in our health and wellbeing, and the need to protect and enhance them in the face of climate and ecological emergencies. We share that passion and are committed to making the best of our open spaces with the resources available – not just money but also time, energy and creativity that comes from many individuals and communities involved.



The Community Spaces Network

The Community Spaces Network was created in 2015 to assist community groups in caring for their community spaces. It is constantly evolving and now includes groups who care for a wide range of public open spaces including formal parks, play areas, pocket parks, nature reserves, woodlands, community orchards, street-side flowerbeds and many more. [The Hive](#) online resource includes all the key documents as well as a directory of the Open Spaces Volunteer Groups across South Gloucestershire. Through the Community Spaces newsletter we share monthly updates, training opportunities and news from the groups in the Network and from the Council StreetCare teams which work on the Network sites. You can sign up for the [Community Spaces Newsletter](#) if you are a group, a volunteer or just interested in what we're doing.

We generally host a Community Spaces Network event once a year to celebrate and say thank you to the many volunteers involved. Some sites are involved in other events throughout the year, such as biodiversity monitoring or heritage open days which you will also find here.

For more details please GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk or visit the Community Spaces Network Hive at www.southglos.gov.uk/thehive

Thank you

The Community Spaces Place Improvement team, South Gloucestershire Council
2023

South Gloucestershire Compact

The South Gloucestershire Compact is an agreement between the public sector and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in South Gloucestershire. It sets out a way of working to strengthen the relationship between the sectors, for the benefit of residents and communities.

The South Gloucestershire Compact advocates a way of working for the sectors to promote collaboration and improve relationships. The Compact lists principles or sets of guidelines for sectors to follow. If an event occurs that is in breach of the Compact principles, the mediation and dispute resolution process will be used to resolve the situation.

[South Gloucestershire Compact](#)

Caring for our Community Spaces

Open Spaces Volunteer groups - what are they?

An Open Spaces Volunteer group is a collection of local people, of all ages and abilities, who come together with the aim of improving the appearance, facilities, conservation value and/or safety of their local park or other public open space. Working in partnership with the Council they give local residents a greater say in what goes on in those areas. The Council works with a wide range of groups that can be known by other names e.g. Friends groups, Conservation groups and In Bloom groups. In essence all these groups can carry out a wide range of projects including:

- Contributing to the planning and management of their open space
- Undertaking practical tasks such as conservation task days, woodland management, litter picks (Big Spring Clean) and orchard tree planting
- Enhancing biodiversity, for example by installing and monitoring bird and bat boxes, creating new wildlife habitats
- Enhancing heritage assets, for example by researching local history, installing information boards or trails and hosting events
- Maintaining and improving Public Rights of Way
- Fundraising for improvements and events on the open space
- Improving access for all users, including wheelchairs and push chairs, audio or braille information, sensory spaces, multi-lingual information
- Raising awareness of the open space, by such as the creation of a website or social media presence, producing leaflets and other educational material, talks and guided walks
- Acting as eyes and ears to protect the open space from anti-social behaviour and unlawful activities.
- Helping with consultation on any improvements
- Reporting any damage on the open space via the [StreetCare Helpdesk](#) so that the Council can react quickly when it occurs

Why form a group?

Communities come together with a common interest in public open spaces for any number of reasons, the main one being to do something positive for a place that you all care about. A formally recognised group is an effective method of achieving this.

Groups will often start off small and in time attract new members as they start to achieve things. A group is commonly made up of local people who can have a range of different backgrounds, each person being able to bring their skills and knowledge to the group. Some people offer just a few hours a year whilst others can donate a few hours each week to the group. Together the group can be an active force for good in their community. There are several benefits to making the group official, such as enabling you to set up a bank account which will be essential for most kinds of fundraising, and allowing you to have a Volunteer Agreement with South Gloucestershire Council so we can offer additional support and insurance cover.

Why does the council want to encourage groups?

The "[South Gloucestershire 2036](#)" Sustainable Communities Plan and the [2020 Council Plan](#) sets the direction of the Council and its partners, with sustainable inclusive communities and addressing climate and ecological emergencies as key priorities. This is now being developed further in the [Greener Places Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) (2021).

We want to celebrate the area's rich history and beautiful landscapes, as well as protecting and restoring our natural environment and encouraging greater biodiversity. Working with residents we aim to support local communities to help them conserve and enhance our green spaces, historic landscapes, and natural resources for the benefit of people, wildlife, and the wider environment. Setting up and supporting Friends groups is one way to achieve this.

The Council has been supporting Friends groups for many years and has seen the benefits that Friends groups bring to managing public open spaces. The Community Spaces Place Improvements Team is here to support these groups and to help develop new ones.

Who is responsible for public open spaces within the council?

StreetCare (within Place Operations)

StreetCare is the section of the Council that deals with managing public open space and highways. The service covers everything from street lighting, potholes, and waste management to drainage, play areas and open spaces.

There are several teams within StreetCare which you may interact with according to which public open space you are interested in, such as Trees, Waste Management & Grounds Maintenance.

The Community Spaces Place Improvements Team

Within StreetCare we have a dedicated project team that improve public open spaces and can support and provide professional advice to Friends groups, as well as working closely with staff who have skills in biodiversity conservation, landscape architecture, formal and informal play and environmental education, trees and Council maintained cemeteries and allotments.

You can contact CommunitySpaces@southglos.gov.uk where your enquiry will either be sent directly to the most relevant staff member, or to contact the Open Spaces Volunteer Groups Support Officer directly GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk.

If you are planning a project on Council owned or managed land it is very important to contact the team at the earliest opportunity. This is to:

- Ensure that you have the required permission from the council for any alterations
- Ensure services searches are done to identify electric, gas, water, telephone and any other services which cross the land above or below ground
- Make sure your work is insured in case an accident happens during or after the project
- Avoid any potential problems arising from the project's interaction with existing or upcoming council activities
- Let other Council officers know about your project, for example so that maintenance work does not interfere with it
- Assist you if funding is required, including registration on the Council Grants system
- Support your event planning with any licensing or other agreements needed in plenty of time

Setting up your group

How to form an official group

Once you have a group of people who are willing in principle to commit to forming an official group, the process is fairly straightforward. You will need to draft a governance document which sets out what your objectives are and hold your first formal meeting, where you agree to this document and appoint the essential roles. This process is covered in

more detail in the following sections, and a template constitution is available in the [Useful Documents](#) section.

You can also get support from [CVS South Gloucestershire](#) who are mentioned several times in this guidance and you will find more information about them in the [Local Support Organisations](#) section below.

Objectives and organisation

The two key aspects of setting up a group are **what is it for** and **how will it work**. These are set out in the governance document, the simplest of which is a Constitution which we have [provided as a template](#) in Useful Documents section.

It is likely that the group will already know what it wants to achieve from the informal stages up to this point, which might include for example:

- Preserve [site] as a public space for the enjoyment of nature
- Maintain and improve access to [site]
- Improve biodiversity and wildlife habitats at [site]
- Ensure members of the local community are included in decisions about [site]
- This will form the **Objectives of the group**.

The other thing to agree is how the group will be organised, and what roles are required. The minimum required is a Secretary and Treasurer, but many groups also have a Chair. The day-to-day decision making is normally done by a committee, which may be most of the members if the group is small. However, it is important to agree how many people are needed for decision making so that you don't need to re-write your constitution as you grow.

Membership

Your Constitution will also say who your members can be, and there might be a reason you want to restrict this e.g. to a maximum distance from the site, or it may be open to anyone who agrees with the objectives of the group. The Members are responsible for deciding, by election, who will be on the Committee and who will hold the named roles (also known as Elected Officers).

Committee

The Committee are a small number of volunteers who take on responsibility for keeping the group going and co-ordinating the other volunteers. They need not all be volunteers who also do physical tasks in the park or open space, and it is important to recognise and value the many skills that volunteers can offer to a group.

If there are particular local groups which you want to be involved, you might agree that they should have a representative in the Committee, e.g. a local forest school group who use the site.

The Committee will include the Secretary and Treasurer (and Chair if you have one) as Elected Officers and your Constitution will say how many additional people there should be, normally equal or slightly more than the total number of officers (i.e. 2-3 Elected officers plus 3-4 others). This is a minimum number, and you can choose to have more. When thinking about how many people you want to have on your committee, remember that you

want to have spare capacity to share tasks if someone suddenly becomes busy in their personal life, and not just cover the immediate needs.

Committee and Elected Officers will normally be appointed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) - see below, but you can allow in your constitution for additional people to be co-opted during the year by the existing Committee and formally appointed at the next AGM.

Elected Officers

All groups will need to have a Secretary and Treasurer. Many also have a Chair. You should agree how long an individual can hold the role, and if they can be re-elected. A common practice is a 3-year term and can be reappointed once without a break, although they might move into another named role or remain on the committee after this point. This is to prevent an individual from keeping unregulated control over a group for a long period, as well as giving confidence when someone agrees to take on a role that it has an end point.

Secretary

The Secretary is usually the main contact of the Group. The main duties of the Secretary include:

- being the main contact between the Group and the Council, ensuring essential documents such as the Volunteer Agreement and records of hours are kept up to date
- being the main contact for the public, such as via a group email address
- organising committee meetings and AGM. Liaising with other members for suitable dates and booking a room or setting up an online meeting
- preparing the agenda (often with the Chair) for meetings
- ensuring minutes are taken (themselves or by another volunteer), distributing the minutes promptly and ensuring actions are followed up
- informing the committee about correspondence sent to and from the group
- writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group
- dealing with formal paperwork such as insurance and group documents including volunteer agreements and policies (e.g. Equality and Diversity policy and Safeguarding policy)
- ensuring formal reports are prepared if required, such as to Parish and Town Councils or reporting back to funding bodies. The reports could be delegated to other committee or group members, but the Secretary is ultimately responsible
- keeping South Gloucestershire Council informed of planned activities, seeking their advice and input if necessary

Treasurer

The Treasurer looks after the group's funds. The main duties of the Treasurer include:

- opening a bank account (with other committee members) in the name of the group
- applying for grants on behalf of the group
- paying bills incurred by the group
- keeping a written record of money received and money spent
- reimbursing committee members' expenses

- keeping petty cash
- preparing the accounts for auditing
- preparing statements for the Annual General Meeting

Chair (optional)

The main and most obvious duty of the Chair is to run the group's meetings. Some groups may decide to operate without an elected Chair, and either the Secretary takes on these responsibilities or the Committee agree who will perform this role in each meeting.

During a meeting **someone** should:

- introduce any guest speakers
- introduce each agenda item and provide relevant background information
- encourage the meeting to make decisions
- ensure that the meeting stays on track and finishes on time
- allow everyone who wishes to speak to do so (time permitting)
- Other duties carried out by a Chair might include:
- preparing the agenda (usually with the Secretary) for meetings
- attending other meetings on behalf of the group or nominating an alternative attendee
- guiding the group to meet its aims

These are the essential responsibilities which need to be covered, and in small Groups may be the only named roles. As your Group grows or during particularly busy times, there may be other roles you decide to appoint. Examples include:

Assistant Chair/Secretary/Treasurer – to support the roles above if the workload grows

- **Membership** – to look after volunteer records and communications, act as point of contact for new volunteers
- **Communications** - first point of contact for the group for external enquiries, might maintain the group's email account instead of the Secretary and forward emails onto the right person to respond to them.
- **Digital Media** – website and/or social media co-ordinator
- **Task day co-ordination** - Agrees list of workdays with the committee and ensures these are communicated to members.
- **Equipment and Resources** – monitors tools etc for care, maintenance, and replacement. Responsible for suggesting new tool and equipment orders
- **Events** – perhaps co-ordinating a programme of events, or taking responsibility for a particular event
- **Training** - identifies training needs and organises training opportunities
- **Fundraising** - works closely with the Secretary and Treasurer to help raise money for the group and apply for grants.

Make it official

Once you have agreed these essentials and drafted your Constitution document, you are ready for your first formal meeting of the Group. To register your Group with South Gloucestershire Council we will need to see a copy of your Constitution and minutes of your meeting which include:

- Formally launching the group and adopting the Constitution
- Who has been appointed into named positions

After that we do not need to know the details of your meetings and will not normally attend unless there is a specific item which it is useful for us to discuss with the Committee directly as a whole.

Set up a group email

We recommend all Groups set up a group email address rather than using the personal email of one of the members. There are many free online email services available such as Gmail (Google), Yahoo, Hotmail which are accessed from a webpage which makes it easy to share responsibility and transfer to a new person if the group contact changes.

Set up a bank account

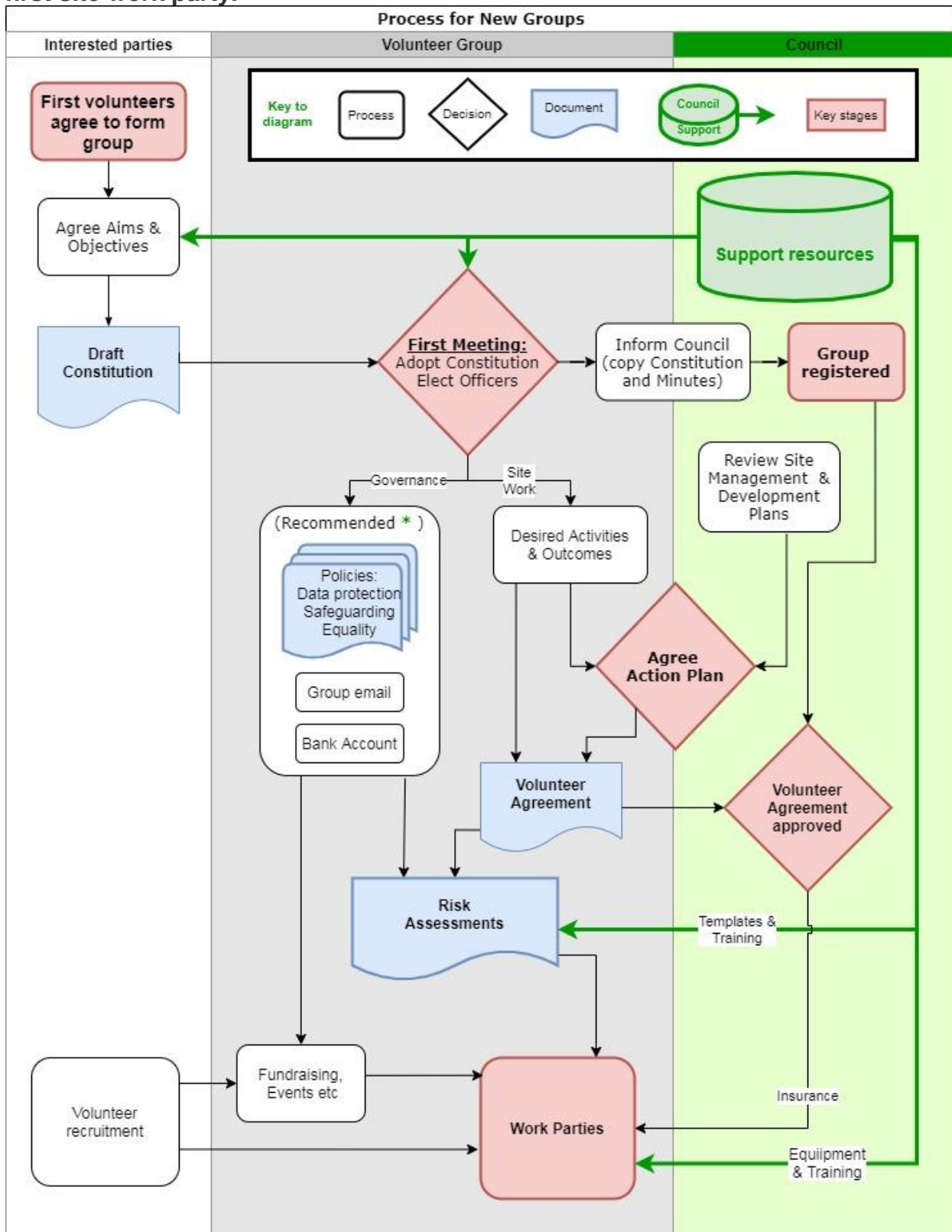
In order to receive funding, you will need a bank account. This is also the safest way to keep track of money held by the group. You will need at least two signatories; one will normally be the Treasurer.

Most banks and building societies offer a bank account for charity and non-profit organisations, but they vary in what services they offer so make a few enquiries or look online for an up-to-date comparison. You will want to think about:

- What is the minimum amount needed to open the account? Some banks have no minimum
- Do you need to pay in cash from donations? If so, can you do that at a nearby branch or post office
- Do you want to use online banking? This can allow more than one person to view the account to support the Treasurer.
- Do you want a debit card? If so, who should control it and how will you agree purchases

You can find more information on the process in this simple guide [How to find the best charity bank account | money.co.uk](#). Additional support is available from CVS.

A simple diagram of the process for new groups from initial set up through to their first site work party.



* Additional support on Governance is available from CVS (See Open Spaces Volunteer Handbook, Part 1: Getting Started)

Governance

Governing document

This document is the core rules your Group will follow. The simplest is the [template Constitution](#) and we recommend this for starting groups (as above).

If you are part of an established group, your governing document might be called “Memorandum and Articles of Association” or something else, but should still contain the essential elements:

- What the Group is for and where geographically it relates to
- Any restrictions on membership and any specific organisations invited to send a representative
- Elected officers and their specific responsibilities
- Committee number and specific responsibilities
- How often meetings should happen and how much notice is required
- A note on subscriptions (if you wish to be able to require a membership fee now or in the future, which can always be set at Zero)
- Provision to allow the Committee to agree additional rules
- How to amend the Constitution
- How to dissolve the Group

Additional support on creating or amending a constitution or other governing document is available from [CVS](#).

Other documents and policies

When applying for funding, it is a condition of South Gloucestershire Council's grants schemes (and many other funding sources) that organisations submit copies of their governance document (constitution), accounts (or bank statements), safeguarding and equality and diversity policy documents.

For help with accounts and all aspects of managing group money, there is useful advice from Resource Centre here [Looking after your group's money | Resource Centre](#) which includes an accounting spreadsheet you can download.

Do not be put off by words like ‘equal opportunities’ or ‘safeguarding’. For a very new or small organisation, these documents can be basic as long as they represent your organisation and its work. We have provided some good practice templates below for you to download as a basis for your own policies. They should be amended to reflect your particular site and circumstances, and we are happy to check them over once complete.

If you need further advice and support with accounts or developing policies, contact [CVS](#).

Equality and Diversity Policy

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality of opportunity recognises that sometimes individuals need additional or different provisions in order to participate or access something equally.

Diversity is about respecting and valuing all forms of difference in individuals and positively striving to meet the needs of different people. People with different backgrounds and attitudes bring fresh ideas and perceptions.

An equality and diversity policy usually describes your group's **commitment to ensuring the group is inclusive**, the purpose of the policy, and how, in broad terms, your organisation will meet its responsibilities.

All organisations should have an equality and diversity policy. The Council has produced a good practice equality and diversity template which you can download and adapt. CVS South Gloucestershire can help you develop your policy.

[Link to good practice equality & diversity template](#)

Safeguarding policy

Regardless of whether or not your organisation works directly with children and/or vulnerable adults, all organisations should have a safeguarding policy. This is a **short statement of your group's commitment to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe** and how, in broad terms, your group will meet its responsibilities as part of its activities.

Volunteer groups bring people together from many parts of the community, and through that you may become part of each other's informal support network. If for any reason you should have a concern about one of the volunteers, or someone attending an event, the Safeguarding policy will make it clear what to do to get them the help and support they need. It is always better to be prepared in advance than have to work it out whilst responding to a real-time situation.

We do not expect your group to have a substantial understanding of safeguarding, such as would be required for a group working directly with children or vulnerable adults. You just need:

- a basic understanding of safeguarding terms and principles
- a policy statement which relates safeguarding principles to your activities and circumstances
- to follow the [Open Space Volunteers Safeguarding Procedure](#) for any concerns or incidents
- if in doubt call 999 or the contact numbers for reporting a concern, given below and at [South Gloucestershire Safeguarding](#)

REMEMBER: It is not your responsibility to decide if something is “bad enough” to warrant investigation.

If a volunteer is concerned about anything they encounter whilst volunteering, or a concern is raised about a volunteer or the Group, this must be passed to trained Council staff to determine the appropriate course of action. If at any time you feel someone is in danger, call 999.

Policy statement

Your policy statement should include:

- Commitment to keeping children safe and responding to concerns
- Understanding of basic child safeguarding terms and types of abuse/neglect
- Commitment to keeping adults safe and recognising that adults can be vulnerable at any stage of their life
- Understanding of basic adult safeguarding terms and types of abuse/vulnerability
- How this relates to the Group's activities
- What the Group does to safeguard children and known vulnerable adults in their normal practices
- Commitment to follow the reporting procedure provided, and if uncertain to use the SGC safeguarding board numbers from the website
- Understanding that as a volunteer group no-one is expected to support individuals beyond normal compassion and respect, nor investigate concerns except with the support of SGC as directed
- Who is responsible within the group for reviewing and monitoring the policy

Resources and training

These template policies will help you with the wording, and the websites have resources to help you understand the terms used for different types of abuse, neglect, or vulnerability:

[Safeguarding Adults Policy & Procedures Templates - Ann Craft Trust](#)
[Example safeguarding policy statement | NSPCC Learning](#)

Additional support for adapting policy statements to your group is available free from CVS businesssupportofficer@cvs-sg.org.uk

Free training is available on both child and adult safeguarding for all volunteer groups in South Gloucestershire.

For safeguarding Children Training contact Safe in Your Hands Training for available dates safeinyourhands@hotmail.com

We recommend that you identify someone in your organisation who is willing to be a **Safe-guarding Champion**, and we will provide training to help them know what you group should do if you have a concern. There is also a short video on the basics of Adult Safe-guarding which should help you understand why it is important to be prepared to respond if necessary.

[South Gloucestershire Council: An Introduction to Safeguarding Adults - YouTube](#)

Procedure

The [procedure for reporting and investigating concerns](#) has been developed jointly by the Community Spaces Place Improvements Team and Safeguarding Team.

The procedure details what to do if a concern is raised during the course of your volunteer activities, and how the Council will support your Group to respond to it.

You should not include in your policies any requirement for the group to investigate or monitor the situation – if you become aware of something which concerns you, it should be raised with the relevant South Gloucestershire Safeguarding team, or if it is an emergency

using 999. The procedure for reporting and investigating concerns is provided by the Council and must be followed.

The standard [Incident Reporting form](#) can be used to record details where available.

Data protection

In order to run a group effectively the committee will have to hold on to personal information of its members. The Data Protection Act (2018) (including the General Data Protection Regulations or GDPR) controls how personal information is used by organisations, businesses, or the government. Everyone responsible for using data has to follow strict rules called 'data protection principles'. They must make sure the information is:

- used fairly and lawfully, and in a way which is transparent to individuals
- used for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- used in a way that is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary for the stated purpose
- accurate and kept up to date
- kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary
- handled according to people's data protection rights
- kept safe and secure
- not transferred outside the UK without adequate protection

Groups should consider what personal information they ask members to provide, how this information will be shared and stored, and how long it will be kept. Some types of information, such as medical details, need careful consideration and additional justification for recording them. A simple policy will ensure the committee is aware of how information will be kept and will enable group members to be aware of how their details are stored.

You should not keep things for longer than necessary, and our suggestion is to securely destroy (e.g. shred) the information on past volunteers 6 months to a year after they stop volunteering, as this is long enough that their information may have changed should they return.

There is a simple guide for Data Protection in community groups here including sample policy and procedures you can adapt - [Data protection for community groups | Resource Centre](#).

Included in [Useful Documents](#) and Part 2 of the handbook "Working on Site" are examples of forms your group may wish to adapt, which will contain personal information of members. These forms include an Attendance Day form, an Image Consent form, and a Personal Information form. You may also have training records for volunteers.

Medical information

When considering what data you collect, think about what you need to know, when and for what purpose.

You probably do not need to collect and keep medical information from all volunteers.

To fulfil Health & Safety responsibilities, your activity leader can check on the day if any volunteers need to adapt their activities, and it doesn't matter if this is due to a long-standing condition or because they are getting over a recent illness or injury.

Some volunteers may feel it is important for the First Aider/activity leader to know they have a particular condition in case of an incident, in which case you need to work out how this data can be held securely and accessed if needed.

Images

If you want to use any photos for your group publicity or project records, you need permission from any people pictured. The template [volunteer information form](#) includes consent to use images, and it is probably easiest to keep a list of anyone who is NOT happy to be shown that you can check before sharing any images.

Members of the public (including family members of volunteers) need to be asked for image consent when the pictures are taken, and a [template form](#) is provided below. If they refuse, you should delete the image immediately to avoid future uncertainty or accidental use.

Meetings

There are two main kinds of meetings for which minutes should be taken for your records

General Meetings invite all current members. Groups will normally have an Annual General Meeting (AGM) where the reports of the year are shared, and any elections or appointments are done. If an urgent matter comes up, you can also call an Extraordinary General Meeting of all members.

Committee Meetings include just the committee plus any invited guests, and many groups allow any volunteers to attend and participate. If a matter needs to be voted on, only the Committee members would normally vote. Your Constitution will often state the minimum number of Committee meetings which should be held each year. You might also have working group meetings on particular projects, but these may or may not take minutes and instead report back to the next Committee meeting.

Day to day management

Governance is not just about the documents and official aspects; it also includes the day-to-day communication and management of your group. There is no right way to do it as long as it works and keeps everyone informed and involved. Not everyone will be confident with email or digital platforms, so you may need to provide paper copies to some people where necessary to keep them informed and included.

Here are some ideas and tools which can be useful:

Email – this is probably the most common method used by committees to communicate and continue work between meetings. The main pitfall is remembering to copy the right people into discussions so it doesn't become two or three people having a private chat when it shouldn't be.

Facebook Group – you can set up a closed group for discussions on Facebook which can be useful for sharing ideas and informal chat.

Online meetings – There are several platforms to have meetings online, such as Skype, Zoom, Teams etc which allow you to have a formal meeting or informal discussion in real-time without needing to worry about room hire or travel. You can share documents on screen for discussion and many allow you to record the meeting which can be useful for the minute-taker to refer back to.

Doodle – is a free online scheduling tool which can be useful for planning meeting dates/times. One person creates a Doodle Poll with some suggestions, and everyone responds with their availability so the best one can be chosen. [Doodle](#)

WhatsApp or Signal – many people with smartphones already use one of these to keep in touch with family and friends, and the group chat feature can be really useful for quick reminders such as meet-up times and locations, and for sharing issues spotted on site with photos.

Shared calendar – Google and several other online sites can host an online calendar for your group where you can keep your workdays, events, meetings etc. Members can link the calendar to their smartphone or computer and see updates as they are made

Online document storage – you may want to keep your documents in a shared place rather than on individual private computers. Google Drive and Dropbox are the most well-known, but all of them allow you to share files with multiple people, and many allow you to work online together on the same document

Publicity and fundraising

Promoting your group

Promoting your group to the wider community can reap many rewards - the more people know about what you're doing the less suspicious they are and more involved they feel. It could lead to more volunteers or create opportunities for links with other local organisations.

- Let people know you exist and that someone cares about this public open space.
- Let people know before things happen to stop speculation.
- Let people know after you've consulted them, so they feel involved.
- Let people know how well you did with something or what new things you've found.

Most people have access to emails and the internet so it's important to embrace technology where we can, whilst remembering the value of physical methods such as noticeboards and flyers when used well. Here are a few ideas that you may wish to consider using to help get your group recognised more widely and to help get your message across.

Group email account

Email is probably the most common method of communication, and we recommend all groups have a dedicated email address for the group. This means group email does not get mixed up with personal mail, more than one member can access the group's email inbox, and it also helps when there are changes to the committee.

Gmail from Google and Outlook from Microsoft are probably the best known at the moment, but there are other options such as ProtonMail, Yahoo, AOL and many others which offer online login and storage.

There may be many other ways locally to get the word out. Some ideas include:

- Parish newsletters
- Parish and Town Council notice boards
- Local free papers (e.g., The Week in Kingswood, Downend Voice etc)
- Local papers – e.g., Bristol Post (let them know when you're doing anything - some of these papers have Facebook pages)
- Local Online papers - these are becoming more popular – e.g., Bradley Stoke Journal
- Notice boards in public open spaces
- Posters in public open spaces
- Have a stand at other events - village fetes, church fetes, festivals
- Talk to other people/groups - do a talk at Rotary/Round Table/Local History Society
- Libraries
- Town centre notice boards

If you are writing an article or want to include a quote from a Council document or staff member, you must get agreement from the Council first so we can ensure it is accurate and any queries can be directed to the right team.

Social media

There are many ways to have a presence online, and social media can be a great tool if you have volunteers who are keen to use and update it. You can promote group activities and events, share news, and invite feedback from your wider community. It can also be used to increase support from local residents for funding bids.

Don't feel you have to use every platform, focus on what feels useful to you and keep it manageable so that it doesn't become a task in itself.

Facebook is probably the most versatile and some groups use as a "home" for their group instead of a website. Facebook Groups can also be used as a discussion space for volunteers and to share feedback internally.

Twitter is probably of limited use to Groups but if you have volunteers who use it a hashtag (#) for your site might work for spreading the word.

Instagram and Flickr are focused around photos and can be a good way to invite other users of your site to share their pictures and memories.

NextDoor is a more local social network and can be good for connecting with nearby residents.

Connect with your local councillor

Keeping your local councillors informed of your group's activities is highly important. Local ward members represent you and local residents on South Gloucestershire Council. They are interested to know what is going on in their patch. Ward members have an important say in the way Council funds are spent and are also responsible for Member Awarded

Funding. You may consider writing to them, including them in your mailing list, inviting to your events or asking them to attend your AGM.

Parish and Town councillors can also help if you keep them informed. They can support your group's work and pass on details of what you're doing to other residents. They may also be able to offer you some funding, through a small grant or a service level agreement. Consider doing a short presentation to your parish or town council meeting to explain what your group does.

[Find your SGC ward councillor](#)

[Find your local town or parish council](#)

Connect with other Groups

It's a good idea to look around and see what other groups are talking about and what events they are holding. You may be able to join forces. Here are a few ideas:

- Join the **Community Spaces Network** by registering with us and [subscribing to the Newsletter](#). We share news from Groups across South Gloucestershire as well as resources and training. We can also list you in the directory of Open Spaces Volunteer Groups which will help prospective volunteers and other groups get in touch with you.
- Look at the list of Open Spaces Volunteer groups on the Council website and get in touch with other local groups either near you or looking after similar sites
- The **South Gloucestershire Green Spaces Forum** is a collective organised by local Open Spaces volunteer groups. You can contact them at sgfriendsforumsecretary@aol.com to be added to their mailing list and receive information on future meetings.
- Connect with your local **volunteer centre** (see [Local Support Organisations](#))
- Check out neighbouring community group websites in South Gloucestershire
- Contact groups and forums in other adjacent local authorities, e.g. [Bristol Parks Forum](#) [Friends of Parks in Bath & North East Somerset](#)
- Check out national organisations e.g. [Parks Community UK](#), [TCV Community Network](#)

Attracting and retaining new volunteers

There are a number of ways to attract new volunteers to your group or get the word out that you need extra hands for a particular project. There are traditional ways, like word of mouth or a poster campaign, or you can use social media and ask members and friends to share in their networks. Research shows that this is often the most effective way to reach new potential volunteers.

Whether you're a new group or an existing group we often hear that there is a need for more volunteers. We encourage groups to approach organisations set up specifically to help people volunteer within their community. In South Gloucestershire there are two organisations who are useful contacts

Thornbury Volunteer Centre covers BS32 and BS35 postcodes

Southern Brooks Community Partnership has several work areas each with their own team - Kingswood, Cadbury Heath & Staple Hill; Patchway & Filton; and Yate

You can find out more about them in the [Local Support Organisations](#) section below. It can also be useful to step back and ask ourselves why people volunteer and what prevents them from joining us. Research has shown that most people volunteer because they want to help, or for a cause that is important to them; and for prospective volunteers, flexibility on when and how they volunteer is important. You might have a poster up saying your regular volunteering session, but if you clearly welcome contact from those who would want to do it at another time, or who want to support with admin you might get more responses.

Summaries of research, which are easy to read with key points and recommendations include:

[Help and Guidance – involving volunteers – supporting and managing volunteers – NVCO](#)
[Environmental volunteering: motivations and barriers - Forest Research](#)

If someone joins you for a few sessions then stops coming, you might want to politely ask why they stopped and if there is anything that would make it easier or more appealing for them.

Employee Volunteering

This organisation works with employers to arrange group volunteering events for their staff. This is best suited to single day practical tasks, and you will need to fund any materials and equipment.

[Contact Us - Communities | Employee Volunteering](#)

Skilled Volunteers

You may want to look for volunteers with particular skills such as accounts experience or website skills. Reach Volunteering is a platform where you can advertise for particular skills, and where potential volunteers can offer themselves to organisations.

[Reach Volunteering](#)

Fundraising

How we can help

One of the first questions Friends groups often ask themselves is how they can raise funds to help the group to get established and how can they get funding for large scale projects, so they can make a difference to their open space. The Council recognises that in order for Friends groups to run they require funding for both revenue (day to day expenses) and for capital projects (one off schemes). To help Friends groups the Council has a Community Grants team, which oversees all the Council's grants.

A good starting point is [Grants for community projects](#) section of the Council website which gives the types of grants. Many individual grant schemes have a frequently asked questions (FAQ) and guidance document online which includes the essential information, and the Grants team are available to answer any other questions.

Grants administered by the Council

The Council offers grant funding to voluntary groups to help them with their projects. The Council manage a range of funding streams that include low value grants for running costs and small pieces of equipment, to larger sums that can contribute towards major projects.

Member Awarded Funding (MAF) – awarded by local Councillors to support work in their ward. They can award funding either to a single project or divided between many. You can find out more and see if your local Councillor still has funds [Member Awarded Funding | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Area Wide Grants – applications between £500 and £3000 are considered twice a year, with applications usually closing in April and October. These grants are for projects, events and services that benefit the residents of South Gloucestershire in at least 6 of our 14 Community Engagement Forum (CEF) areas.

The Grants team can support with determining eligibility and with the application process itself. Call the grants helpline on 01454 86 5865 or email grants@southglos.gov.uk for advice or to book a 30-minute appointment to discuss your project plans.

If the Council does not have a grant suitable for your group, there may be other funds and organisations that can help. The Council works closely with organisations, like CVS, who are set up to support the voluntary sector. These organisations will be able to support your group in finding the most suitable grant schemes available to you.

Grants administered by others

Lottery Funding

The National Lottery is a well-known funder of community projects, and they have different funds for different types of activities. You can find a list of their funding and a simple tool to determine what might be appropriate here [Funding Finder - National Lottery Good Causes](#)

Landfill Communities Fund

There are several funds related to landfill and waste management taxes which are available in the South Gloucestershire area. They particularly fund the provision, maintenance, or improvement of a public park; the conservation or promotion of biodiversity; or the restoration of a place of historic or architectural interest. Some also fund the reclamation, remediation or restoration of land which cannot currently be used.

These are administered by specific management companies related to the local landfill site. You can find more information here [Landfill Communities Fund | Entrust.org.uk](#)
The Community Spaces Place Improvements Team are experienced in applications to landfill funds and can work with your group if you think this might apply to you.

Other kinds of funding

There may be other opportunities for funding which you can find locally:

- Some supermarkets have local community award schemes for the money collected from plastic bag charges (e.g. Tesco, Co-op)
- Local businesses may be willing to sponsor or help fund a project or installation

- Another local charity or community organisation may have a practice of giving surplus funds to local causes
- Direct fundraising by the group by asking for donations or holding events or competitions
- Sponsorship and crowd funding can be led by an individual such as by doing an activity.

Managing larger projects

If your group wants to embark on a larger project and have identified potential funds but are concerned about managing the project once it gets going, the Council may be able to help. The Community Spaces Place Improvements Team develop and co-ordinate internal improvement projects and may be available to support large projects proposed by Groups and advise on funding applications.

Agreeing a work plan

Before starting work on site or beginning a new project, Groups need to agree with the Council what they will be doing, where, and how this will be done safely. This is covered in more detail in **Part 2: Working on Site** but there are two main aspects.

The **Volunteer Agreement** covers what can be done safely in principle, provided necessary training and risk assessments are complete

The **Action Plan** is the strategy for the site, who is responsible for what and how it will be funded

Volunteer Agreement

The Volunteer Agreement is a legal agreement between the Council and the Group on what types of tasks can be done by volunteers on the site without the direct supervision of a Council staff member. This is only concerned with safe working by volunteers and allows volunteers to be covered under the [Council Insurance](#) (see below).

It does not imply that the listed activities are approved everywhere on the site, only where agreed in the Action Plan or an equivalent discussion with Council staff. The council expects all groups working on Public Open Space Assets to have a volunteer agreement in place to ensure that we are informed of the work being carried out by community groups. The volunteer agreement covers the agreed activities under the Council's combined liability insurance and needs to be in place even if the group has separate insurance. For guidance on whether your group needs separate insurance, more information can be found [here](#).

What should be in it?

A [Model Volunteer Agreement](#) is provided in the Useful Documents which includes all the main areas that need to be covered. Some examples are given of activities which are generally considered appropriate for volunteers, but you should make it specific to your site and what you actually plan to do. If you agree that volunteers can only do something in a specific part of the site for safety reasons, you could include that (*e.g. "clearing scrub on North side of main path ONLY" where South side has a steep slope or a fall risk*).

Some sites will need extra sections relating to heritage assets of more complex management agreements which will be added by Council officers where necessary.

Volunteer Agreements are **renewed annually in March**, so it only needs to include what you expect to be doing in the coming year. It can be amended during the year if necessary but will still be renewed the following March.

Leadership and Health & Safety

The Volunteer Agreement expects that at least one volunteer has had suitable training and is competent to plan activities, complete Risk Assessments and safely lead other volunteers to complete the tasks. This could be someone with professional experience from their employment or another volunteer role, or the Council will provide training to ensure your group has sufficient volunteers who can meet this requirement. However, the number of volunteer leaders required for an activity will depend on the number of volunteers involved, and the activity being carried out.

The Volunteer Agreement also details the expected First Aid provision and where required this can be a volunteer with existing qualifications or the Council will provide training. Generic Risk Assessments for many of the tasks normally undertaken by volunteers are available on [The Hive](#), but you must ensure they are tailored to your site, group and individual volunteers and are reviewed at least annually, but may need to be updated more frequently to reflect a change of circumstance; this is to ensure they remain relevant. Risk assessments need to be kept for your records and must be signed and dated when updated, even if there is not change when you review them. Support to discuss and review your risk assessments is available by contacting the Community Spaces team at Green-Space.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk

Council Approval & Supervision

The Volunteer Agreement must be reviewed and signed off by an officer from the Community Spaces Place Improvements team before your first session of the year it covers, and a signed copy will be returned for your records. We may ask to see additional documents, but by completing the Volunteer Agreement your group has taken on the responsibility to complete the required risk assessments and ensure there are volunteers with suitable training on site for the planned tasks whenever required.

The Community Spaces Place Improvements Team will try to resolve any issues by collaboration with the Group, however the Volunteer Agreement can be terminated by the Council at any time if the Group is not complying with it and there is a risk to volunteer safety or the public, or site management concerns.

Action Plan

All Groups need to discuss with the Council what they plan to do and where on the site, but it will vary between sites and groups how detailed the plans are. Some will have a very informal agreement, perhaps discussed on site with a staff member or by email; some groups have a detailed plan of works they want to do which is agreed with the Council; and some sites have a full management plan with responsibilities for different tasks across several years laid out in full.

These plans should always be collaborative, reflecting what the Group wants to achieve on site, how the Council will support this directly as well as aspects of the Council site management plans which are agreed to be relevant. They are living documents which can be changed at any time and are jointly owned by the Group and the Council.

Whether large or small, these are known as Action Plans and will normally include:

- What the Group plans to do, including regular or seasonal tasks

- What the Council plans to do, including directly supported activities
- Any variations to Grounds teamwork agreed (e.g. not mowing a particular area)
- Upcoming major work by the Council which the Group should be aware of

The plan might also include aspirational activities or projects which would need to be funded. These would be things that both Group and Council agree would be beneficial, but which would require external funding. By including these in Action Plans it can help Groups be prepared if they become aware of some funding at short notice, and the Community Spaces Place Improvements team will be able to support the application more easily because it has already been discussed.

Insurance

What do you need?

If your group intends to undertake practical tasks and/or hold events, then you will require insurance. This might be:

- **public liability insurance** which covers accidents to the public on site
- **personal accident insurance** to provide compensation for your volunteers
- **equipment insurance** to ensure that all tools and storage facilities are covered for loss or theft

Council Insurance for Volunteer Groups

South Gloucestershire Council can provide insurance cover to volunteer groups working on Council maintained land, using our existing insurance as we do for staff. This includes public liability insurance and personal accident insurance. In order to be covered, the groups must complete a **Volunteer Agreement** as above.

All volunteers are covered under the Council's combined liability cover, as if they were employees. With any accident, there is no automatic right to compensation and each incident is assessed on its own merit.

Volunteer groups must have written risk assessments in place, which account for the individual needs of group members. The council offers support and guidance on developing these risk assessments.

Additional or independent insurance

Activities outside the council cover

Obtaining private insurance is not an alternative to having a Volunteer Agreement, however some groups organise and deliver projects that fall outside the Council's insurance. Examples include running a café or holding charitable fund-raising events. Some groups therefore look elsewhere for cover.

Many insurance companies offer insurance to community groups and small businesses, and the range can be quite daunting. You can get advice from [CVS](#) on ensuring you understand your needs and don't pay for too little or too much cover. Organisations like TCV (The Conservation Volunteers, formally BTCV) also offer discounted insurance to their members through a partnership with Zurich.

[Community group insurance | TCV](#)

One-off events

You may only need additional insurance for a single event, and there are options to have short term cover which may be cheaper than a full year.

Equipment and storage

The Volunteer Agreement will not cover tools or storage facilities owned by the group. Groups are advised to check their household insurance if they store tools at home or seek specialist insurance either for tradesmen or community groups which cover tools both in storage and on site.

Under 16s

Refer to section on Capability and vulnerability of volunteers in Part 2: Working on Site

If children are only volunteering as part of an arrangement with a partner organisation (e.g. school, youth club, forest school) they are likely to be covered under the partner organisation's insurance as a planned outdoor activity, but you should confirm this in advance.

Training opportunities

Developing skills and knowledge

We aim to help volunteers feel happy and supported in the work they do on public open spaces. Members of Friends groups should feel confident and have a good knowledge of what they are doing and why they are doing it when undertaking work for their community group, especially on practical task days.

To provide additional support to volunteers, we run a series of training sessions led by experienced professionals throughout the year. These range from how to run practical task days to surveying Great Crested Newts.

A seasonal training programme will be available for courses we intend to run, funded by the Council. You will find this on [the Hive website](#) and upcoming courses will be advertised in the [Community Spaces Newsletter](#).

If you would like to self-fund a training session for your group, we are happy to arrange with our providers or put you in touch with them directly.

Course availability

In order to organise these courses, we usually need at least six volunteers to register their interest, but we can sometimes run one course for multiple groups with participants travelling to the agreed site.

Contact: GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk to register your interest or enquire about other types of training. Charges may apply but some courses will be free or can be covered by existing funding

- **General training**
- **Safeguarding (adults and/or children)**
- **Equality & Diversity**
- **Risk assessment**

Site work core training

- Lead Volunteer training, including risk assessment & hand tool use
- First aid training
- Brushcutter and Strimmer Operations (where relevant)
- Waterside Awareness (for sites with ponds, lakes, or water courses)

Seasonal training

We also offer a seasonal training programme including site improvement and management, as well as habitat improvement and biodiversity surveying. Typical training includes:

Spring/Summer

- Dry stone walling
- Scything
- Grassland management
- Wildlife surveying (such as birds, insects, amphibians, and reptiles)
- Orchard – soft fruit pruning

Autumn/Winter

- Access improvements
- Hedge laying
- Orchard – other pruning
- Woodland management

Biodiversity & Habitat Management

As part of our commitment to address the Climate & Nature Emergency, and improve green infrastructure, we support Groups to develop skills relating to the ecology and biodiversity of the sites they look after.

Typical training includes:

- Survey techniques
- Environmental records – how to collect and record your sightings
- Habitat mapping
- Habitat improvements

We also support and encourage groups to get involved in citizen science projects, including leading sessions in public open spaces. Some examples include:

- [Big Garden Birdwatch | The RSPB](#)
- [Big Butterfly Count \(butterfly-conservation.org\)](http://butterfly-conservation.org)
- [UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme \(ukpoms.org.uk\)](http://ukpoms.org.uk)

Valuing our volunteers

Making sure your efforts are recognised

The Council recognises the valuable contribution that our Friends groups make to our local communities. Members of community groups devote hours of effort, energy, and expense to planning, coordinating, and delivering a wide variety of projects for the benefit of public open spaces, wildlife, and the community. To keep members motivated we think it's important that your work is recognised and rewarded.

In order to find out the true value that community groups contribute to the local economy it is very important that the hours volunteered are recorded and your achievements promoted.

Valuing your commitment

Working with each Friends group we will help collate the number of volunteers and the total amount of hours worked. A simple questionnaire is available online which can be completed either after each session or periodically such as monthly or quarterly. Time spent volunteering can be calculated into a financial figure that is recognised nationally, providing important data to the Council on the significant contribution that volunteers make to our society. It is also important to gather this information so it can be used as 'match funding' for any grants you apply for. The data will be fed back to local councillors and the Community Spaces Network to illustrate the significant contribution volunteers make to our working on public open spaces.

Volunteer contributions are calculated based on the rate of £20 per hour, regardless of the task.

Examples:

A group meets every week for 4 hours, with 10 volunteers on an average week

- 4 hours x 10 volunteers x £20 = **£800 per week value to the group**
- If they meet 48 weeks of the year = **£38,400 per year value to the group**
- *The Committee has 6 members and meets 4 times a year for two hours each time; the Treasurer spends on average 1 hour a month looking after the finances*
- 6 volunteers x 4 meetings x 2 hours = 48 hours
Treasurer monthly work = 12 hours

Total 60 hours = £1200 value to the Group

The AGM is typically 1 hour, attended by the Committee and 10 other volunteers; The committee do an additional 6 hours of preparatory work for the AGM

16 attenders + 6 hours preparatory = 22 hours = **£440 value to the Group**

If this group was applying for funding, the match-funding value of their activities for the year would be **£40,040**.

General volunteering	£38,400
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Committee	£960
AGM	£440
Treasurer	£240
Total	£40,040

Recording your successes

Projects that you are proud of can be recorded with images, video clips and a short, written report. These can be sent to us, and we will promote your work to senior staff and Councillors, in the Community Spaces Network Newsletter, and shared on the StreetCare Facebook page. With your permission, articles will be given to our Corporate Communications team to promote on social networking sites and to the local media where appropriate. You may also want to record progress on your project with a scrapbook or online blog. It can be useful to see how much you have done when you look back through the pages.

Recognising commitment

The Chair of the Council's [Community Awards](#) recognises the dedication that local people have to improving their community. There is an annual awards ceremony at an evening reception, usually in May each year.

When the nominations are open, we will share the information in the Newsletter. We will be happy to receive nominations for group members who you think have gone above and beyond their normal role to help enhance and protect our natural environment.

Celebrating your efforts

Every year, in the first week of June, National Volunteers Week celebrates the significant contributions made to the country by volunteers from across the 'third' sector. StreetCare and the Community Spaces Place Improvements team acknowledges local contributions made by our network of Friends groups across various media in this week.

Once a year we invite all the groups to a special evening to highlight achievements. This evening is a celebration and our chance to say thank you to all the volunteers working on our open spaces. It is also an important networking opportunity and a chance to exchange information and views with the Council and its Community Spaces network.

Local Support Organisations

CVS South Gloucestershire

CVS is a registered charity that works with volunteer, community and social enterprise groups and organisations in South Gloucestershire. Along with the Volunteer Centre Network they can help promote your events and volunteering opportunities, but they are also there for independent advice and support, both generic and tailored to your particular group.

- Key areas of support are:

- Good governance
- Organisational development
- Financial management
- Funding advice

Support is accessed through membership, which is free for organisations with turnover below £20,000, and inexpensive at higher income levels. Members get access to unlimited telephone support as well as an online resource area for template documents and other benefits.

Application information can be found here [Members » CVS South Gloucestershire \(cvs-sg.org.uk\)](#) and support with your application is available by email businesssupportofficer@cvs-sg.org.uk

South Gloucestershire Volunteer Centre Partnership

The Volunteer Centre Partnership for South Gloucestershire was set up with several physical volunteering centres, and although only the Thornbury centre remains as an office with drop-in, the function continues through a number of local partner organisations each covering a particular area.

All of the organisations can:

- Advertise your general volunteering opportunities through websites and community newsletters
- Help recruit volunteers for specific roles (e.g. finance, fundraising, website)
- Hold your information as a local volunteering opportunity to share with potential volunteers who contact them for general volunteering opportunities
- Help publicise your events
- Discuss current challenges with you and suggest good practice or resources which might be useful
- Help to link you with other local organisations who might want to collaborate or projects or events

Thornbury Volunteer Centre

In addition to the above they advertise positions through social media, host training and offer a cost-effective photocopying service to local volunteer organisations.

Based at The Town Hall, 35 High Street, Thornbury, they are usually open Monday to Friday 10.30 AM to 12.00 PM.

Tel: 01454 413392

Email: mail@volunteer-thornbury.co.uk

Website: www.volunteer-thornbury.co.uk

Southern Brooks Community Partnership

This charity works across several areas within South Gloucestershire, each with their own team

Contact information for specific areas can be found [here](#).

Volunteering Yate covers Yate, Frampton, and surrounding areas. The contact for this area is Alex Swatton who can be contacted on alexandraswatton@southernbrooks.org.uk or by telephone **07929 787478** They also have a mailing list for regular local updates, and to share volunteering opportunities with the community. To find out more or subscribe to the mailing list, email: volunteeringyate@southernbrooks.org.uk

Volunteering Kingswood covers Kingswood and the surrounding area. They support volunteers and groups and have regular mailings to both lists.

At the time of writing the contact is **Zaya Morris-Taylor** who can be contacted on zaya-morris-taylor@southernbrooks.org.uk or by telephone 07969 189485. If this has changed you will find the information at the website linked above.

Volunteer Centre Patchway, Filton, and the Stokes

At the time of writing the contact is Katie Hanning who can be contacted on katiehanning@southernbrooks.org.uk or by telephone **07971 744846**. If this has changed you will find the information at the website linked above.

Useful contacts

Reporting a problem

With so many tasks to deliver StreetCare operates a system to ensure enquiries from the public are logged and then addressed by the most appropriate officer.

The best way to do this is via the "[Report it](#)" page of the website. Choose the most appropriate category; if it doesn't fit any other category, use the "Parks, play areas and public open spaces" option.

If you can't use the online forms, the StreetCare Contact Centre is staffed between 8.45am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.30pm on Friday. Out of hours emergency service is available outside of these times.

The StreetCare Contact Centre phone number is: 01454 868000.

You can contact StreetCare by email StreetCare@southglos.gov.uk

Please only contact the team using **one form or other method of contact for each issue**, otherwise multiple records will be made for the same problem which slows down the process of getting an inspector out to check the issue.

Street cleansing and litter problems

Litter bins and dog bins are a common cause of problems. Recent changes under the Localism Act have led the Council to work more closely with Town and Parish Councils to deliver these services. As a result some services are now managed at a more local level.

To find out who is responsible for maintaining litter bins on your open space please email waste.management@southglos.gov.uk

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Some public open spaces have public rights of way going through them. Path furniture, such as kissing gates, which is damaged should be reported to the PROW team, attaching a photo, grid reference and path number, if known. Emails can be sent to prow@southglos.gov.uk or if you are not sure if it is a PROW or not, use the "Parks, play areas and public open spaces" option online as above.

Trees

If you are concerned about any trees on a public open space, please report via our website. If you think the tree is dangerous, please phone the StreetCare Contact Centre immediately on 01454 868000. If you can, please follow up your call with an email, attaching a photo of the tree, its location, and species (if known) and send it to StreetCare@southglos.gov.uk, marked urgent.

South Gloucestershire Council

There are a number of other ways you can contact the Council about other matters not covered above:

Telephone: 01454 868686 (main switchboard)

Text (SMS): 07950 080111

Social media: The Council now uses Facebook and Twitter to keep residents informed of Council activities. You can comment on articles that are posted on these platforms and we can work with your group to add content on social media if it's related to the Council's aims and objectives. Contact the Community Spaces team for further information.

<https://www.facebook.com/sglosstreetcare>

Anti-social behaviour

If you have witnessed or had reported to you an incident that is low level crime, we ask that you **always** report it to the police by calling 101, which is Avon and Somerset's non-emergency telephone number. Ask for a crime reference number.

If an incident is taking place on the site and you feel that it is life threatening or its damaging property, please call 999. Fires should be reported immediately to the Fire Service by calling 999.

Useful documents

Included below you will find:

- **Model Constitution** – a template governing document
- **Model Equality & Diversity policy** - a template policy to develop
- **Safeguarding Procedure** – to be used alongside your policy statement
- **Accident/incident report form** – to be used for reporting both accidents and incidents relating to abusive/harassing behaviour or safeguarding
- **Personal information sheet** – for collecting data from volunteers
- **Image consent form** – for obtaining permission to use photos of members of the public (volunteer image consent is included in the personal information sheet)
- **Model Volunteer Agreement** – a template agreement which should be altered to include the activities relevant to your site and group

Model Constitution

This can be used a template for your governing document, amending the **red text** as required. If you amend the Constitution at a future time, include a version number and date agreed.

1. NAME

1.1 The name of the Group shall be **[name]**. Hereinafter referred to as "the Group".

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE GROUP

2.1 To promote the interests of **[site]** located at **[address]**. Hereinafter referred to as "the Site".

2.2 To represent the interests of the local community in matters of the Site to South Gloucestershire Council who are the owners and/or managers of the Site.

2.3 To provide an opportunity for members of the Group to meet and participate in volunteering activities together.

2.4 [optional additional objectives as required]

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

3.1 Membership of the Group shall be open to **[specify here if members shall be from a particular geographical area, otherwise "any person over the age of 16"]** hereinafter referred to as "the Membership".

3.2 In addition to 3.1 above membership of the Group shall only be open to individuals who agree with and act upon the objectives of the Group.

3.3 Membership is forfeit to any who act against the objectives of the Group.

4. MANAGEMENT OF THE GROUP

4.1 The Management of the Group shall be entrusted to the Group Committee, hereinafter referred to as "the Committee".

5. OFFICERS OF THE GROUP

5.1 The elected Officers of the Group shall be **[the Chairperson (optional)]** the Secretary, the Treasurer_etc. hereinafter referred to as "the Officers".

5.2 Voting for the election of Officers shall take place at the AGM

5.3 Officers shall be elected for a term of **[one year/two years/etc – you may wish to state a maximum number of re-elections or duration after which they should stand aside but may still serve on the Committee, and if so a duration after which they may stand again for the Officer role, e.g. "and may serve no more than 3 terms without a break of at least 1 year before standing again"]**

6. COMMITTEE OF THE GROUP

6.1 The Committee shall be composed of the Officers of the Group plus at least [a number usually equal to or one more than the number of officers] of elected members from the Group Membership.

6.2 [EITHER – “The Chairperson of the Group will normally preside at and chair all meetings of the Committee (or Group) and shall be responsible for reporting to the Membership at the Group’s AGM” – OR – “The Committee will ask one of its number to Chair at each meeting and agree who will report to the AGM” (if the Group does not wish to have a Chair)]

6.3 The Secretary shall be responsible for all correspondence relating to Group affairs, for announcing Committee meetings, and the production and distribution of minutes from those meetings. The Secretary shall also be responsible for announcing the AGM and shall give at least 30 clear days’ notice of such a meeting and its agenda. Items for inclusion should be submitted at least 45 days prior to the AGM. The Secretary shall keep records about the Membership of the Group and any other papers pertaining to the Group, its Members, and activities.

6.4 The Treasurer shall be responsible for the collection of subscriptions (if any) and will account for any other income and expenditure made on behalf of the Group. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the payment of any subscriptions or contracts entered into by the Group. The Treasurer shall present the accounts of the Group to the Membership at the AGM, and at any other time make the accounts available to the Committee upon request.

6.5 The Committee shall have the power to co-opt additional non-voting members. [(optional) the following groups with an interest in the site shall be invited to send a representative to Committee meetings as a non-voting member]

6.6 A quorum for a meeting of the Committee shall be half of the elected voting members. In addition to the AGM the Committee (or whole Group) shall hold at least [four or another suitable number] meetings each year.

7. GROUP SUBSCRIPTIONS

7.1 The Committee shall have the power to set membership subscription levels for the Group on an annual basis.

8. RULES OF THE GROUP

8.1 The Committee shall have the power to set Group rules. Such rules shall be in accordance with the articles of the Group's Constitution.

9. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE GROUP

9.1 This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority. Notice of any amendment must be delivered to the Secretary at least 45 days prior to the AGM.

10. DISSOLUTION OF THE GROUP

10.1 A discussion to dissolve the Group can only be taken by majority vote at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting.

10.2 Any remaining assets will be:

- a** Used to pay outstanding debts.
- b** Transferred to any other voluntary organisation that shares the same principles and aims of the Group.

Model Equality and Diversity policy

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE POLICY

[organisation] recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential.

The organisation will do all it can to ensure it recruits, trains, and appoints to named roles based on qualifications, experience, and abilities for all roles within the organisation.

This policy is designed to ensure that [organisation] complies with its obligations under equality legislation and demonstrates our commitment to treating people equally and fairly.

[organisation] is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics).

Using fair and objective practices, the organisation aims to ensure that

- All volunteers and potential volunteers are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their involvement with the organisation.
- All volunteers, supporters from other groups and the general public have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from volunteers or by people (third parties) who are not volunteers of [organisation], such as supporters or the general public.
- All volunteers have an equal chance to contribute, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.
- All volunteers, supporters from other groups and the general public have the right to be free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy applies to:

- Volunteers (prospective, current, and former)
- Family and other persons connected to Volunteers
- Representatives of local community groups or partner organisations
- The general public

The policy applies to all stages of volunteering including recruitment, training, serving in named roles and general volunteering. It also applies to the decisions made by [organisation] on the design and delivery of events and projects.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of **the Secretary** to ensure the policy is implemented and reviewed periodically.

Responsibility for approving the policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with **the Committee**.

All volunteers of [organisation] have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

All volunteers will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity.

Communications

Communication of the policy to volunteers and partner organisations through [e.g. website, new volunteer pack, available in shared document storage]

Working with community partners

In selecting our partners, we will consider their commitment to Equality and Diversity by: [e.g. who do they represent, do they have and follow an Equality & Diversity Policy, their reputation in the local community]

Participants in our activities

We will make our activities accessible by:

- [supporting both physical and non-physical volunteering
- Welcoming short session and irregular volunteering on site where possible
- Publishing access and task info in volunteering session publicity
- Varying volunteering session days/times
- Offering training and mentoring for new volunteers with existing volunteers]

In implementing out the policy, the organisation will carry out the following actions:

- [Request exit interview or written feedback for volunteers who choose to leave in order to identify potential issues]

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION / POTENTIAL DISCRIMINATION

Anyone who feels that they have suffered any form of discrimination in the course of their volunteering for or other interaction with [organisation] should raise the issue with **the Committee** via **the Secretary** [insert organisation contact details here]. If they wish to do so anonymously, this can be done by post to [address]

Volunteers should also use this approach if they feel that they been the subject of harassment from someone who is not part of [organisation]. [organisation] will not tolerate any harassment from third parties towards its volunteers and will take appropriate action to prevent it happening again.

If a volunteer/partner organisation representative witnesses, behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should also use this procedure.

If a report of discrimination has been raised with **the Committee** and the individual does not feel it has been handled appropriately, they may refer it to the Community Spaces team at South Gloucestershire Council for support CommunitySpaces@southglos.gov.uk.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and identify areas for improvement and methods used will include:

- **Periodic anonymous Equalities and Access survey with members**

This policy will be reviewed [**insert timescales e.g. every two years**] by **the Committee** to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation.

The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered

Open Space Volunteers Safeguarding Procedure

This procedure is for all groups operating on South Gloucestershire Council managed land. It must be used whenever a concern is raised by a volunteer whilst volunteering, or if a concern is raised about the Group or an individual volunteer.

Important telephone numbers

If you believe an individual may be in danger at any time, call 999

If you are concerned but there is no apparent immediate danger, use the telephone numbers below, also given at [South Gloucestershire Safeguarding \(southglos.gov.uk\)](http://southglos.gov.uk)

Concerned about a child?

01454 866000 - Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm

01454 866000 - Friday 9am - 4.30pm

01454 615165 - Out of hours and at weekends

Concerned about an adult?

01454 868007 - Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

01454 615165 - Out of hours and at weekends

Record Keeping

Incidents should be reported using the standard [Incident report form](#) including any additional information on extra sheets as appropriate.

If you witness something which you feel is concerning or suspicious, make any notes you can at the time, such as:

- School or organisation information (e.g. logos from clothing)
- Names (where known or overheard – do not try to obtain them directly if an incident is occurring)
- Physical descriptions
- Vehicle number plates
- What you observed

- You could discretely take a photo but be cautious of drawing attention or putting yourself in danger

This does not mean you have to report a concern, but you can reflect on the situation later knowing you have information available, and it may become relevant at a future point.

If a concern is raised by a volunteer this should be documented and sent to the Group Secretary and to the Community Spaces Team CommunitySpaces@southglos.gov.uk as well as any directions given when calling the numbers above. Investigation will be co-ordinated by the relevant Council officers.

Concerns raised by volunteers

Concern about a child in a partner organisation

Concern raised by volunteer, regarding a child in group you are working with

- Contact safeguarding lead for partner organisation (if possible)
- Contact South Glos Council Child Safeguarding using the numbers above
- Notify Community Spaces
- *Where the concern relates to the behaviour of an adult from the partner organisation, Community Spaces will ensure the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has been notified*

Concern about any other child

Concern raised by a volunteer about a child attending an event, the child of a volunteer or a member of the public observed in the Open Space during volunteering

- If an incident of concern is currently happening call 999 and speak with the Police
- If you become concerned after the fact or any other circumstance where 999 was not appropriate, use the South Glos Council Child Safeguarding numbers above
- Notify Community Spaces

Concern about an adult being supported by an external group

Concern raised by volunteer, regarding an adult in group you are working with

- Contact safeguarding lead in partner organisation (if possible)
- Contact South Glos Council Child Safeguarding using the numbers above
- Notify Community Spaces
- *Where the concern relates to the behaviour of a staff member or other responsible adult from the partner organisation, Community Spaces will ensure the local authority lead for people in a position of trust (PIPOT) has been notified*

Concern raised by a volunteer about a member of the public, or the welfare of another volunteer relating to their personal circumstances. Also if a volunteer discloses a personal situation which causes concern.

- If an incident of concern is currently happening or you believe the individual is or is likely to be in danger, call 999 and speak to the Police
- There is no expectation on volunteers/groups to provide support and they should not offer to do so beyond normal compassion and respect.
- Encourage the individual to seek support. If they know who to call but want moral support, it may be appropriate to stay with them whilst they call
- **Ensure personal safety of volunteers at all times**
 - Do not accompany the person out of sightline of other volunteers.
 - Do not offer to accompany the person to any place they feel unsafe.
 - If it is appropriate to escort the person to a nearby public location (eg their car, a bus stop), this should be done by two volunteers with others informed of what is happening
- If the person gives details of the situation **DO NOT** promise confidentiality as you may need to speak with the Police or relevant third party in the future, but do respect their wishes if they are adamant, they don't want external intervention
- If the individual tells you they are already being supported by a local service, contact the South Glos Council Adult Safeguarding numbers above and pass on the details of the incident
- If the individual refuses to seek help but is expecting support from the group or volunteers (which is not appropriate) you should contact the South Glos Council Adult Safeguarding numbers above
- Where possible, agreement should be obtained from the adult before sharing personal information with third parties, but this should not prevent you from reporting a concern if you are unable to ask for permission
- Notify Community Spaces if a report is made to emergency services or Adult Safeguarding
- Complete an incident report if appropriate (eg for a specific occurrence or situation witnessed)

Concerns about individual volunteers' or Group behaviour

Concern raised about a volunteer's behaviour or direct allegation about a volunteer or the Group, made by anyone (e.g. other volunteer, event attendee, partner organisation, member of the public, etc)

- If an incident of concern is currently happening or you believe **anyone involved** is or is likely to be in danger, call 999 and speak to the Police (unless you know someone has already done this)
- Obtain the contact details of everyone concerned, record any details already given (but do not probe further)

- Report to Community Spaces CommunitySpaces@southglos.gov.uk who will arrange for the appropriate Council Officer to investigate. Initially this would be the local authority lead for people in a position of trust (PIPOT), or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if a child is involved.
- The volunteers in question, or the whole group may be asked to suspend their volunteering during the investigation, if this is felt appropriate by the Council
- Do not discuss the matter further within the Group

Any allegation will be investigated by South Glos Council, requesting information as appropriate from volunteers who will be supported during this process. It is important that allegations are thoroughly investigated through the safeguarding process so that either allegations can be proved or disproved for the protection of both children/vulnerable adults and volunteers.

The volunteers involved will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and appropriate action taken depending on the outcome. Appropriate information will also be shared with the Secretary/Committee in broad terms, protecting the privacy of those concerned.

Where a concern is not upheld, it would be expected that the volunteer be able to resume volunteering without prejudice. In other circumstances the appropriate action will be discussed, and a recommendation will be made by the Council. Concerns about the investigation can be brought to South Glos Council as a complaint if the volunteer feels there has been any unfair treatment.



Data Protection Act 2018: The information provided on this form will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and will only be disclosed within the Council to members of staff who need to know it in order to carry out their duties. Relevant information will be disclosed outside the Council where it is required by law to do so. In the event of a personal injury claim, information may be disclosed to the Council's Insurers

Accident/Incident/Violence Report Form

Accident
 Violence/Aggression
 Dangerous Occurrence/ Near miss
 (x or tick one)

Person Involved (injured person)			
Name:	Date of birth	Gender	M / F
Address:			
Dept: COMMUNITY SPACES	Site:		
Job Title (If employee):			

Volunteer
 SGC Employee
 Member of Public
 Event attendee
 Contractor

When & Where it happened	
Date	Location
Time	

What happened	
Description of Events	(Give details of witnesses if possible. If a violent incident, give details of assailant)
Outcome (eg Injury, damage, etc) - If injury, name part of body affected	
Treatment	
Was the injured person taken to hospital? Yes / No	
Volunteers Only: Has the person had to stop work?	Yes / No
If the volunteer has had to stop work, then inform Community Spaces by phone or email if the injury is likely prevent them attending their usual employment for more than 3 days.	
If the volunteer is unable to work, for how long is the absence expected to last?	

Management Action	
Was the activity or workplace covered by a risk assessment? Yes / No	Is there a need for a revised or new risk assessment? Yes / No
Details of Further Investigation	
Details of Employee support provided	
Action taken to prevent a recurrence	

Activity Leader on the day	Person Involved
Signature & Date	Signature & Date
Name	Name
Group	Group

Racial or Sexual Harassment: If you believe that the incident involved some element of racial or sexual harassment, make an additional report of it using the Council's Anti-social Behaviour reporting form

Personal information sheet

[group name]

We are committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all our volunteers. Current legislation also places the responsibility on you, the volunteer, as well as the group to take all reasonable steps to make sure safe working practices are carried out.

Data Protection Act 2018 - The personal data on this form will be only used by the group in order to provide its service to you and for project monitoring purposes.

Documents: You may wish to read the following documents which are available on request/on our website:

- Constitution
- Equality & Diversity policy
- Safeguarding policy

Volunteer

Forename	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>
Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>		
Address	<input type="text"/>		
Postcode	<input type="text"/>		
Tel No	<input type="text"/>	Mobile No	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>		

Emergency Contact

Forename	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>
Relationship to you	<input type="text"/>		
Tel No	<input type="text"/>	Mobile No	<input type="text"/>

Consent to use images/video

In order to celebrate the work of volunteers we sometimes take images (still and moving) of our activities on site. Are you happy for us to use images of you for publicity purposes?

Yes / No

Health & Safety Considerations (including medical conditions)

We welcome all volunteers and will endeavour to accommodate reasonable adjustments to enable participation where required.

To support the Health and Safety of all participants, it is your responsibility as a volunteer to only take on tasks which you feel are appropriate and manageable, and to discuss your needs and anything which may affect the safety of yourself or other volunteers on the day with the Volunteer Activity Leader if you feel it is necessary.

You will not be asked to disclose medical information, except by a First Aider in the case of an incident.

If you choose to disclose medical information to the Volunteer Activity Leader on the day, it will be treated in confidence and will not be recorded unless there is a specific incident which requires that it is recorded.

- I confirm that I understand my responsibility only to undertake tasks which are safe for me as an individual, and to request adjustments or change of tasks on the day, which will not reasonably be refused.
- I give my consent to the Group to hold this personal information about me in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Name	<input type="text"/>	Signed	<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>		Updated: August 2021

Image Consent Form

The still or moving images taken of people detailed below may be used by **[group]**, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL and its partners for:

Press/news releases, promotional information, or training purposes in print, moving images (video/film) websites and social media channels (including Facebook, twitter, Flickr, and YouTube). Permission must be sought from parents/carers when taking images of children or vulnerable people.

Images taken at:

Date:

Person responsible for consent form:

Name of person being photographed / filmed	Contact telephone number	Email address	Signature

The image(s)/video will be kept in accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 and other laws.
 This consent is valid for five years from the date of signature.
 The images(s)/video will not be used after this date without your further consent.

Model volunteer agreement

[NAME OF GROUP]

AGREEMENT EXPIRES 31st MARCH [year]

South Gloucestershire Council recognises the valuable contribution made by voluntary groups to the wellbeing of places and communities in South Gloucestershire.

[NAME OF GROUP] is a group of volunteers who wish to help maintain **[SITE]** for the benefit of the community.

This Volunteer Agreement describes the ways in which the **[NAME OF GROUP]** can help fulfil the expectations of the **current site management plans**, in particular, listing tasks that are scheduled to take place between the period **[date of agreement to following 31st March]**.

[OPTIONAL] Heritage Assets (owned or managed by the Council)

The site includes protected heritage assets in the areas marked on the site plan. Before commencement of any volunteer physical works, the lead volunteer must consider whether their activities are likely to need the approval of South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) or Historic England (HE) as a result of the statutory designations covering above and below ground structures.

[Detail of heritage considerations e.g., "The majority of the site is classified as a Scheduled Monument, numerous structures are statutorily listed (as well as being scheduled) and the whole site is within a Conservation Area."]

Any works directly targeted at masonry and structures, or excavations within the heritage asset area may require listed building consent (from SGC) or Scheduled Monument Consent (from HE). Other works within the heritage asset area, including seasonal maintenance tasks listed below should be checked with SGC staff to agree a suitable method before commencing.

[OPTIONAL] Complex site management

Management of the site is divided between SGC and [other] as detailed in the site plan. This agreement applies **ONLY** to those areas managed by SGC, and permission cannot be given by SGC to work outside these areas. Separate consent for activities and appropriate personal accident and public liability insurance will be required to work in areas owned or managed by others (e.g., under lease).

The following list, which has been agreed by the group with staff from the Community Spaces team, is not exhaustive but includes those tasks that can reasonably be undertaken by the Group. Tasks may be omitted and added subject to agreement by both parties and formal signoff by SGC. These tasks include:

Physical Works (on Council owned or managed land only) [SPECIFIC TO SITE]

Examples:

- Litter picking
- Collecting large items of rubbish and/or notifying StreetCare for removal
- Scraping away of debris from steps (e.g., woodland steps) and paved/tarmac areas [except in heritage asset areas]
- Hand cleaning information signs, notice boards and park equipment with warm soapy water only
- Himalayan Balsam control by pulling/cutting and / or removal of flowers / dead-heading
- Planting of bulbs, plants or small trees provided or source-approved by SGC, in agreed locations
- Licenced monitoring and cleaning of natural and man-made habitats/refugia, in conjunction with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act 2000). Failure to comply with current legislation may result in prosecution.

Public Rights of Way & permissive paths (on Council owned or managed land)

- Cutting back of encroaching and overhanging vegetation from paths and using hand tools only or where necessary trained operation of agreed power tools.
- Any tree limb removal from ground level of any branch greater than 1inch/2cm must be carried out by trained operatives.
- Monitoring way-marker signs and, where necessary, cleaning or replacement
- Monitoring finger post signs, cleaning as necessary and reporting damage to appropriate officers.

Guided walks and events (on Council owned or managed land)

- All events must be held in compliance with local Health & Safety guidance at the time of the event
- Conducting observational surveys of plants and wildlife on site (i.e., visual recording of individuals or evidence without baiting or trapping)
- Leading organised walks, observation-only, on subjects relating to the site are permitted for groups up to 30 people. Events must be notified 15 working days (3 full weeks) in advance to CommunitySpaces@southglos.gov.uk including expected numbers and detailed location/route if possible.

- Other events or activities on site up to 30 people, including picnics, group activities, trail markers, interactive walks (such as foraging or wild art) and any larger events require **permission** which must be requested at least 15 working days (3 full weeks) in advance.
- Events over 30 people or requiring exclusive use of a public open space, must obtain Hire of Open Space permission from SGC. Notification period is 6 weeks for large event. More information can be found using the link below: Application is free to volunteer groups and a site plan is essential in order to adequately inform key stakeholders on changes to public open space assets.

<https://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/hire-of-public-open-space/>

Equipment

- Prior to practical works starting on site, a tool safety talk must be given by a suitably trained operative to ensure all tools are checked and that guidance for their safe use is given to volunteers.
- Power tools (e.g. Strimmers, trimmers, brush cutters, jet washers) may be used upon confirmation of risk assessment, the operative having received accredited training certificate and possession of full and serviced PPE and equipment. Failure to operate a power tool without correct PPE and service certificates will be done so without formal permission from SGC and is done so at the risk of the volunteer.
- Permission must be sought from Community Spaces team officers before power tools can be used on Council owned or managed land.
- Other tools (for cutting and striking etc) may be used for specific tasks such as fencing, hedging and tree felling, subject to completion of Manual Handling and Safe Use of Tools training. Training can be sourced through SGC.

Monitoring & Reporting

- Monitoring fly-tipping and reporting locations to StreetCare
- Monitoring (ONLY) of Japanese knotweed (including photographs) and reporting to StreetCare
- Reporting the location of dangerous or fallen trees to StreetCare
- Monitoring of graffiti / vandalism / damage to facilities and structures and reporting to StreetCare
- Reporting any hazards encountered to relevant Council officers.

StreetCare Helpdesk

Reporting: <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/general-information/online-services/report/>

Email: StreetCare@southglos.gov.uk

Telephone: 01454 868000

Please add any activities your group wish to carry out that are not listed above.

A list of commonly approved activities is included in the Volunteer Handbook Part 2

N.B. Landlords agreement will be subject to review and formal response from the Community Spaces Team.

Activity	How often?

Leadership

The Council expects that the Group has at least one competent volunteer responsible for overseeing the activities listed above, however, for some tasks, or if working with larger groups, more than one project leader will be required. If groups are undertaking practical tasks, project leaders should be experienced with sound knowledge of health and safety issues and safe handling of tools. The Council will offer training to volunteers to ensure Friends groups have a sufficient number of members competent to lead activities.

Risk assessment

No works will be undertaken by the **[NAME OF GROUP]** until

- relevant generic risk assessments and guidance notes (provided by SGC) have been reviewed
- site and task specific risk assessments have been completed by competent and trained members of the Group
- Safe ways of working determined through the risk assessment have been communicated to the volunteers

Lone working by volunteers is only permitted where a site-specific lone working policy has been developed.

First aid cover

The Council advises that a suitably trained first aider will be present at activities where sharp tools are used and this person will be equipped with suitable first aid materials. Where the Group’s own risk assessment has determined that there should be more first aid cover for certain tasks, this should be adhered to.

The Council recommends that the Group has at least two members trained in Emergency First Aid course (6 hours) and other members where possible should attend an Essential First Aid course (3 hours or online). Training courses will be organised by the Community Spaces team throughout the year.

When a task has been assessed and no first aider is needed, the minimum requirement is to appoint a person to take charge of first aid arrangements. The roles of this appointed person include looking after the first aid equipment and calling the emergency services if required. They can also provide emergency cover, within their role and competence, where a first aider is absent due to unforeseen circumstances. To fulfil this role, appointed persons do not need first aid training.

Insurance cover

This Volunteer Agreement ensures that individual volunteers are covered by the Council's insurance policies whilst undertaking tasks listed above on behalf of the council; individuals must be suitably trained to carry out work safely, and written risk assessments must be in place.

No insurance cover is available from the Council for any activities other than the above unless previously agreed in writing. The Council cannot cover the Group for activities not directly associated with the management of the site.

Insurance cover is only provided on works undertaken on land owned or managed by South Gloucestershire Council. This insurance policy does not include Content Insurance. Any tools or equipment should be insured by a separate policy sourced by the owner or the volunteer group where required.

This agreement does not cover assets installed by the group that have not been officially adopted by the council.

Groups wishing to install a new asset, that will not be officially adopted by the council, will need to apply for a licence. For more information on this, contact GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk.

Groups who take on a licence, for an unadopted new asset, will need to maintain their own public liability insurance cover (*currently a minimum cover requirement of £10 million*) for the lifetime of the asset, to ensure they are protected against any claims made by the general public.

This agreement can be terminated at any time by the Council if the group does not comply with it.

In return, South Gloucestershire Council, through its relevant officers, agrees to support and guide the **[NAME OF GROUP]** and to provide training and advice to ensure members have a good understanding of management techniques related to the public open space (e.g. habitat management, visitor management, health and safety issues).

Signed: Position: Chairperson

Dated:

Group: **[NAME OF GROUP].**

Signed: Position:

Dated: Community Spaces Team, StreetCare, SGC.

Copies of signed document held by South Gloucestershire Council Community Spaces team and Secretary of **[NAME OF GROUP].**

[INCLUDE MAP OF SITE WITH BOUNDARY AND ANY AREAS MENTIONED]

Contact us

If you would like to see any changes made to this document, please contact us using one of the following methods:

Phone: 01454 863581 or 865877 (please leave a message)

Email: Communityservices@southglos.gov.uk

GreenSpace.Volunteering@southglos.gov.uk

Post:

South Gloucestershire Council

Department for Environment & Community Services

PO Box 1954

Streetcare & Transport Services

Bristol

BS37 0DD