



Volunteers Policy

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Policy Author:	Kenny Stocks
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Scottish Housing Regulator Guidance:	5.1, 5.2,

Ardenglen Housing Association can provide this procedure on request, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ardenglen Group ('the Group'), comprising Ardenglen Housing Association as the parent and Ardenglen Developments as a subsidiary, is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.
- 1.2 Regulatory Standard 5 states that an RSL must "*conduct its affairs with honesty and integrity*" To ensure this, the Group has clear policy and procedures in place which make sure the organisation acts with transparency, honesty and propriety and avoids any public perception of improper conduct.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Ardenglen. It is of relevance to all within Ardenglen, including volunteers, employees, members and those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility.

2. Commitment

- 2.1 Ardenglen recognises the right that people have to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering. It also acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit users of services, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves. Ardenglen values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and which develop volunteering.
- 2.2 Ardenglen recognises its responsibility to arrange its volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

3. Definition

- 3.1 Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship as well as an important component of democracy. Volunteers are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the community.

4. Statement of values and principles

- 4.1 Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by Ardenglen and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements, but does not replace the role of paid staff.

- 4.2 Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that employees are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers.
- 4.3 Volunteers will not be used during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.
- 4.4 The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise Ardenglen cannot be compelled to provide either regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.
- 4.5 Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what Ardenglen expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of Ardenglen.

5. Volunteer Co-ordination

- 5.1 All volunteers will have a nominated member of staff or volunteer to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out tasks effectively. Volunteers will be informed of who to contact to receive support and supervision.
- 5.2 Volunteer co-ordination will be explicitly referred to in all relevant job descriptions within Ardenglen.
- 5.3 The nominated post holder with overall responsibility for the development of voluntary activities within the Association is Fiona McGovern, Regeneration Officer. This person is responsible for the management and welfare of the Association's volunteers.

6. Recruitment, Selection and Protection of Vulnerable Groups

- 6.1 Ardenglen is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion and political beliefs. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned will be disregarded by Ardenglen in terms of recruitment and selection.
- 6.2 Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community.
- 6.3 Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the organisation or referred to the nearest Volunteer Centre.

- 6.4 Any individual over the age of 18 working closely with children or vulnerable adults will be supervised at all times. Ardenglen will consider obtaining Enhanced Disclosure or Protection of Vulnerable Groups certificate for volunteers; however, this will be dependent upon the nature of the work undertaken and supervisory arrangements in place.
- 6.5 If you are considering volunteering with Ardenglen and you have any criminal convictions (other than those spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) you must declare this, confidentially, to the Association's Regeneration Officer, Fiona McGovern. Please ask Fiona for the appropriate form and ensure the form is submitted in a sealed envelope clearly marked 'Private and confidential'.
- 6.6 Volunteers will have a clear and concise task description, which will be regularly reviewed. The task description will be prepared in conjunction with the volunteer and the designated person referred to above.
- 6.7 New volunteers will be properly inducted into the Association.
- 6.8 Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence

7. Training & Development

- 7.1 All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health & safety, child protection and equal opportunities.
- 7.2 The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for Ardenglen in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It will be the responsibility of the designated person referred to above to see that this training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend relevant training.
- 7.3 Training in the management of volunteers will be provided for those staff with direct responsibility for same.

8. Support, Supervision and Recognition

- 8.1 Volunteers will have a named person to whom they can take their volunteering concerns and seek guidance and support.
- 8.2 Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and the supervisor to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be negotiated between the volunteer and the designated officer referred to above.

8.3 Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with Ardenglen's staff and Board.

8.4 A process will be developed in order to give formal recognition of the contribution of Ardenglen volunteers (e.g. internal awards, articles in newspapers and newsletters, thank you letters etc.).

9. Expenses

9.1 Ardenglen recognises that the reimbursement of expenses incurred in travelling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

9.2 Ardenglen volunteers are able to claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure. What can be reclaimed from the Association and the calculation of expenses is contained in the Association's Board & Volunteers Expenses Policy and will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses.

9.3 The Association has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses which are the same for volunteers, staff, etc. and are as approved by the Inland Revenue.

9.4 It is the responsibility of the designated person referred to above to make volunteers aware of the procedure for the reimbursement of expenses.

10. Insurance

10.1 The Association's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

10.2 Ardenglen does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

11. Confidentiality

11.1 Ardenglen will advise the volunteer on its confidentiality policy and procedures, where relevant. This would include those relating to personal information held by the Ardenglen relating to the volunteer.

12. Settling Differences

12.1 Ardenglen aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The Association seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences.

- 12.2 The designated officer referred to above is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct and these should be referred to him/her.
- 12.3 In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by Ardenglen to the volunteer while it endeavours to resolve the problem in an informal manner. If an informal resolution proves impossible, the Ardenglen's wider disciplinary; grievance or complaints policies and procedures (which include volunteers) will be referred to.

13. Rights and Responsibilities

13.1 Ardenglen recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- have adequate support in their volunteering
- receive appreciation
- have safe working conditions
- be insured
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- receive appropriate training
- be free from discrimination
- be offered the opportunity for personal development

13.2 Ardenglen expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- not be in possession or under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation
- work within agreed guidelines
- respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- comply with the organisation's policies

15. Training

- 15.1 The Association through its Internal Management Plan is committed to training and developing staff and committee members to their full potential in order to deliver a high quality of service in all areas of its business.
- 15.2 The Board induction programme includes an overview of this policy, including responsibilities for the promotion and delivery of openness and confidentiality as relevant to their job descriptions. Committee members will receive updates on these issues and specific training as required.

14. Equalities and Diversity

- 14.1 This policy will be implemented in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy and is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to assess the likely or actual effects of the policy to our customers in respect of their disability, age, gender, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation or gender identity to ensure equal and fair access for all.

15. Monitoring and Reporting

- 15.1 Ardenglen will use appeals, complaints, comments or suggestions from users of this policy to monitor its effectiveness. These will also be used to prompt a review of the policy where necessary.

16. Review

- 16.1 This Policy will be approved by the Board. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

17. Distribution

- 17.1 This policy will be made available to every employee and Committee member and will be made freely available to any tenant or interested party.

18. Legal Framework

- Criminal Disclosure Act
- The Rules of Ardenglen

19. Related Policies

- Payment and Benefits to Members, Employees and their Close Relatives
- Standing Orders
- Conditions of Service
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Financial Regulations
- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Code of Governance

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