

Volunteer Handbook



platform
housing group

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Our Vision

We will create
homes everyone
is proud of and
places where
people thrive



Our Mission

By investing in
people and places,
we will build a
stronger, more
sustainable
future



Volunteering

Why get involved?

There are many reasons why someone decides to become a volunteer.

It may be due to personal circumstances; supporting a cause close to their heart; simply to give a voice for the local community or to influence change through policies and procedures in order to make real change to where they live.

There are also those who volunteer to enable them to develop or enhance existing skills and experiences to aid their personal development. Whatever the reason, volunteering holds many therapeutic values.

Platform Housing Group can offer support in return, such as help with your CV.

Where?

There are a number of volunteering roles across Platform Housing Group that will cater for a range of tastes and interests: from gardening schemes, community events, digital sessions and drop-in sessions to specific roles within our Retirement Living Schemes and Villages.

When?

Volunteering opportunities are advertised on our Platform Connected website:

www.goodsted.com/platform-housing

If you need support finding out more about volunteer opportunities, please email communities@platformhg.com



Platform Volunteering Agreement

This agreement is binding in honour only, is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

There is no intention of either party for an employment relationship to be created, either now or at any time in the future, under this agreement.



What commitment you can expect from Platform:

- We want you to find your role both fulfilling and rewarding. In order to do that, you will have a named officer, who will catch up with you regularly to discuss your volunteer experience and role.
- We will explain the values we expect and will support you to demonstrate them through your volunteering.
- We will do our best to make your volunteering a worthwhile and fulfilling experience.
- We will provide an induction and training plan. This will include specific training and support on health and safety. Depending on the activity, we may issue Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Where possible, we will be flexible in relation to your volunteering hours.
- We will reimburse you with out-of-pocket expenses, including reasonable travel costs to your volunteering location, to be agreed with your named officer.
- We will try to resolve fairly any issues or difficulties you may have whilst you volunteer with us before they become problems. In the event of an unresolved problem, we will offer an opportunity to discuss the issue in accordance with the relevant policies.
- We will be open and honest with you.
- We will update you on how your work has made a difference.
- We will treat you with respect, consideration and show appreciation.
- You will be treated as part of our team.

What commitment we will expect from you:

- To recognise and carry out your duties in line with our organisation's values, policies and procedures.
- To look after and not share information on customers, staff members, volunteers and the organisation. This is confidential and should not be discussed outside our organisation. You will need to comply with GDPR (Data Protection).
- To agree to a Disclosure and Barring Service check if it's a requirement of the role. Not all roles need a police check.
- To ask your support officer or member of the team if there is anything you're unsure about.
- To attend all relevant training.
- If you have the use of a vehicle and wish to claim travel expenses, you must provide us with your driver's licence and your insurance and MOT details (if applicable).
- To dress appropriately and wear an appropriate form of identification.
- To be flexible and reliable in your volunteering role.
- To inform us as soon as possible if you are not able to attend for your volunteering.
- To always treat Platform Housing Group staff, customers, fellow volunteers and others with respect, consideration and appreciation.



The Volunteering Journey

Induction

- Your named officer will introduce you to colleagues and anyone else who you might be working with, this will include a tour of the area, scheme or office you will be working in.
- They will go through relevant policies and procedures.
- There will be a discussion round your training plan and if there is any additional support required.
- The induction provides you with the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Volunteer role description

- This will give you an overview of the role. Read it carefully so you understand the different tasks involved and you are confident that you have the skills and availability to do the role.
- If a DBS check is required for the role, this will be made clear in the role description.
- If you have any queries, concerns or require further clarification please discuss with your named officer.

Support

- You will receive ongoing support with regular catch-ups either by telephone, in-person or online. The format and frequency of the catch-ups will be agreed between you and your named officer.
- To aid development in your role it is recommended that you make notes of the tasks you carry out, what you did, what went well and if there were any issues. This can then be discussed constructively at your catch-up sessions.

Training

- We want to ensure that you are confident in your role. As a Platform Housing Group volunteer, you will be provided with a range of training opportunities that are relevant to your role.
- You will be provided with a copy of your training plan.

Identification

- You will be issued with a volunteer's badge.

Dress code

- Volunteers should dress in suitable clothing and appropriate footwear. Your named officer will advise what is expected.



Policy and Procedure

Volunteering policy

- This policy highlights the importance we place on volunteering within Platform Housing Group. It outlines how and why we involve volunteers within the organisation.
- The policy provides details on recruitment and how we select and manage our volunteers. Through the recruitment and selection process we will treat all applicants as individuals.

Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) – what does this mean?

- A DBS (police check) is carried out to check if a volunteer has a criminal conviction or record.
- Most volunteer roles will not require a DBS check. This will be indicated in the role description form.
- Should you require a DBS check, your named officer will discuss this with you.

Health and Safety

- Your health and safety is important to us.
- Your named officer will give you relevant health and safety information during your induction.
- Following health and safety procedures is important - it protects you, customers and colleagues.
- If you feel something is unsafe you will need to report your concerns to your support officer immediately.

If you wish to have a copy of our health and safety policy, please discuss with your named officer.

Safeguarding

- If you regularly work with customers, your named officer will provide you with a copy of our safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk policy.
- You will also be provided with safeguarding training.

Data protection

- As part of your induction, you will receive training on data protection.
- At times you may have access to personal information - the training will provide guidance on how you keep this information safe.

Confidentiality

- As part of your volunteering role, you may come across sensitive information including personal details of Platform employees and customers, which you should not share with anyone else.
- While volunteering you are a representative of Platform and should not disclose any information or behave in any manner that could harm the reputation of Platform Housing Group.

Boundaries

- It's important that all staff and volunteers maintain a professional relationship to ensure there are clear boundaries while carrying out duties.
- Boundaries are important - they provide clarity on duty of care, confidence in the role you are carrying out and avoids awkward situations.
- Your support officer will talk more about boundaries in your induction.

Social Media

- Volunteers should avoid social communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage Platform's reputation, even indirectly.
- You are personally responsible for what you communicate on social media – as part of your role or on personal sites. Remember that what you put on social media will be available to be read by anyone including colleagues, volunteers, future employers, and people you do not know for a long time.
- Keep this in mind when you post content. If in doubt, do not post it.

Dealing with a complaint

- We want you to enjoy the time you spend with us. If there is anything you are unhappy about, please discuss in the first instance with your named officer.
- If you are still dissatisfied, we have a complaints process that you may access. Please refer to our complaints policy for further details.

Diversity

- Platform Housing Group is committed to being a diverse and inclusive organisation.
- We aim to support all our volunteers, valuing each individual's contribution regardless of age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, civil partnership status, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, political belief or socio-economic background.
- We are committed to providing equal opportunities to our volunteers and to take steps to ensure our volunteers are protected from discrimination.

Gifts

- Exchanging gifts can appear as favouritism or raise expectations, therefore we ask volunteers not to give or receive gifts to/from colleagues or customers.
- If you are offered a gift, please politely refuse. If this is not possible, please discuss with your named officer.

Expenses

- We will reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses to cover local travel or as agreed with your named officer.
- You will need to provide receipts on a monthly basis to support your claim.
- Your named officer will give you more details and show you how to claim your expenses.

Accidents and incidents

- As part of your induction, you will receive training on manual handling, lone working and slips, trips and falls.
- Accidents, incidents and near misses need to be reported immediately to your named officer.

Non-smoking policy

- There is a no smoking and vaping policy in operation on all Platform sites whilst carrying out your volunteering duties.

Insurance

- Platform Housing Group has an employees/public liability insurance which cover volunteers in their role and whilst carrying out their duties.



Our Values



People Matter

The way we treat each other

We put colleagues and customers at the heart of everything we do. Valuing difference, we are free to challenge each other and are open and honest in our relationships.



Own It

The way we want to work

We say what we'll do and then we do it. We listen, understand and are empowered to make decisions. We look for our own ways to learn and adapt and focus on what we can do.



One Team

The way we deliver our services

We are connected, collaborative and in it together. We want everyone to reach their potential and be the best they can be. We actively support each other to make this happen.



Be Brave

The way we look towards our future

We are curious and courageous. We look for better ways to do things, are comfortable trying them and learn quickly. We are not afraid to stand out from the rest and celebrate our successes.
