



Volunteering Handbook

Summer 2021



Contact information:

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The Community Farm Denny Lane Chew Magna BS40 8SZ

Office hours

Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm

Point of contact

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IMPORTANT: All information relevant to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is contained in a section at the end of the handbook. Please ensure you are familiar with these details.

Welcome!

Welcome to The Community Farm. We are very pleased to welcome you to join our team. This handbook is designed to answer the general questions that you may have about volunteering with us.

About The Community Farm

We are a not-for-profit social enterprise located in the Chew Valley just south of Bath and Bristol. Founded in 2011 as a Community Benefit Society, we are a nature-friendly organic farm, owned and governed by our shareholder members. We grow and sell organic and locally sourced food. Working with a network of organic producers and local farmers who share our ethics, we supply fresh, local and organic food via an organic box delivery service. Through our box delivery service we sell local and organic vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy products and groceries.

We provide hands-on experience of organic farming through school visits, volunteering, away days from work, workshops, and events. We invite groups of volunteers from the community and some corporations to come and work on the field. We also work in partnership with third sector organisations, running courses or providing experience in horticulture for people who may have specific needs. Our volunteers provide a huge amount of help on the field and in our veg box operation.

Purpose and values

The Community Farm's purpose is nature-friendly organic farming for a local market; where people of all ages and from all walks of life can get on the land for learning, work, and play; pioneering an ethical and socially motivated business, and learning amongst ourselves and with others. The primary reason for setting up The Community Farm was to create a place for people to experience being on the land and to gain insight into the value and the challenge of ethical farming.

We believe these opportunities are needed everywhere if we are to shift to a society that truly values and safeguards the land and food for the benefit of everyone. To make this possible we need to run an efficient business that can, in time, cover the basic costs of production and distribution. Already the farm is having an impact far greater than just growing on a few acres and providing routes to market for other local producers. It is creating a way for many people to feel part of the real farming movement and it is building a prototype that is helping others with planning and starting local projects elsewhere. The values that we try to follow in our day to day work include honesty, respect for the living Earth, trust, integrity, efficiency, fairness, justice, inclusivity and openness.

Staffing and structure

There are about 20 people (12 whole time equivalents) employed by the farm to undertake roles in: marketing, customer service, warehouse operations, box- packing, growing on the field and volunteer coordination. The field team is managed day-to-day by the Head Grower (John English). We have a Managing Director (Kim Brooks) who oversees staff management and operations. The Volunteer Coordinator (Emmy/ Ian) is your first point of contact for any questions or issues you may have.

The Community Farm is governed by a board of voluntary directors. These individuals give their expertise to help manage the farm and steer its future development. Board members oversee delivery of the business plan; advise, govern, oversee policy and direction; and help promote our activities. A maximum of 11 directors sit on the board at any one time. Each year, at our annual general meeting (AGM), a third of the directors resign from the board, in rotation; they either stand for re-election or move on to pastures new. Any vacancies are then filled through an election by the members.

Membership

Volunteers become 'Volunteer Members' of The Community Farm once they have volunteered regularly for a year and for the duration of their volunteering, through the issuing of a £1 share (as opposed to the normal minimal membership share price of £50). For volunteers who leave The Community Farm after a long period with us and who wish to stay associated with TCF, the board can decide to enable them to retain their £1 share and their membership. Members are entitled to one vote at the AGM.

General information about volunteering

Your role as a volunteer is an integral part of the overall ethos and work at the farm. We greatly value your input, both physical and in the form of any ideas or feedback you may have. The farm operates a volunteering programme that is open to all, promoting community involvement and skills development within a sociable and supportive environment. If you have specific support needs, please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator, who will endeavour to provide you with what you need. Please refer to our equal opportunities policy for more information on this.

Some of our volunteers stay for years whilst others volunteer for a set period of time. We ask that you stay with us for a minimum of 5 days, but after this – there is no minimum or maximum time commitment.

Learning and skills development

On your first day at the farm you will have an induction, which will include a tour around the farm and provide you with Health and Safety information. Most training is done as part of your work with us. We will explain and guide you through each new task; we'll also explain how to use tools safely and efficiently every time we use an unfamiliar tool.

We sometimes run seasonal training sessions, for example, in the spring we may run a 'how to propagate' workshop. We also have one-off events, such as compost making, pruning, foraging etc. The Volunteer Coordinator will let you know about these sessions in advance. Please ask questions if you find aspects of the task you have been given unclear, or if you would like additional information to help you learn.

Checking that you are settling in

One to one review meetings are available on request. We believe that open communication and feedback is a must, so we will check regularly to make sure you are happy with the tasks that you are being given and in your work with us generally. Any comments or suggestions towards improving specifics or the farm more generally are welcome.

How we communicate

The Volunteer Coordinator will send you regular emails which will have key dates for events and workshops, as well as what the plans are for the upcoming weeks. As a volunteer group, we chat (normally veg related) and send photos to each other using 'Whatsapp'. You can contact the Volunteer Coordinator over the phone or by email.

Volunteer and staff meetings

We have volunteer meetings quarterly. This is your opportunity to have an input into the scheme of work on the field, learn about the seasonal action plan and get a clearer picture of the growing strategy.

We also have monthly staff and volunteer meetings. These are often framed more around operational and employee practices, but they are also a useful forum for us to get together and discuss and resolve issues and suggestions, as well as recognising shared achievements. The Engagement Leader will inform you of the date of these events via email.

Taking home vegetables

When available, we give volunteers surplus veg (veg on the edge) as a thank you for your hard work.

Volunteer roles

These descriptions are to give you an idea of the opportunities to get involved at the farm. Have a chat with the Volunteer Coordinator about any roles you are interested in.

Field volunteers

Typical work days vary according to season, but ways that you can get involved can include: picking, propagating and planting; weeding and hoeing; pruning; maintaining the site and equipment; and infrastructure development

Qualities needed for the role

You'll need to enjoy working within a team. However, the farm is a great place for peace and tranquillity so if you like a bit of solitude then this is usually possible too. Most tasks require a reasonable level of fitness and you'll need to be prepared to get muddy!

Gardening/Wildlife volunteers

We have opportunities for volunteers to work on projects which help us become a more nature friendly farm. This role may include: maintaining our raised beds and planters for flowers, maintaining wildflower areas and field margins, planning and developing nature friendly projects (in line with our site plan). You might want to join our 'Wildlife Group', helping form plans for projects.

Creative volunteers

From time to time, we have opportunities in our communication team for some ad- hoc work. Volunteers are typically needed for photography, filming, illustration or content writing.

Qualities needed for role

A creative mind-set and a keen eye for detail are a must. You will also need to be able to provide your own specialist equipment such as cameras and lenses, and be savvy with social media.

When does the farm need your help?

Please do not just turn up, as we need to closely manage group sizes.

We use an online sign-up sheet so we can manage numbers of people on the field more closely. We are running volunteer sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can sign up for these via a link you will receive upon submitting your registration form. You will also be emailed this link regularly in volunteer communications.

If you have additional care and support needs, please contact us before signing up for your first session so we can discuss how we can support you.

If you are unable to attend or no longer able to commit to the volunteering task you have signed up for please let your volunteer coordinator know as soon as you can, so that we can make sure we have enough help.

What will I need to bring for the day?

You should wear work gloves to protect your hands - **please bring your own if you can**. We can however provide disposable gloves or work gloves if this is not possible.

Wear strong boots or shoes, steel-toe caps are needed if you are working with anything heavy. Bring old clothes which you don't mind getting dirty. You'll also need to bring waterproofs. This winter, make sure you come with plenty of warm clothes as indoor time is limited.

You will need to bring with you your own packed lunch, cutlery and drinks flask and water bottle. During this time we cannot provide any teas/coffees as we once did, so please bring your own. Please bring enough of your own food to keep you going throughout the day.

Transport

We understand that it is not the most environmentally friendly way of travelling, but we are not currently facilitating lift sharing to The Farm. Please make your own way to us, and we can pay your travel expenses, so that you are not out of pocket because of volunteering with us. Ask your Volunteer Coordinator for the relevant form.

Health and Safety and Insurance

We will provide you with a safe working environment, suitable protective clothing and training

where required. Please make sure you use tools and personal protective equipment as advised, listen to H&S advice and tell us when you are concerned about any potential problems.

We try to make sure tasks aren't too strenuous, but please be aware that you might be doing activities that your body is not used to. Work at a pace which suits you, take regular breaks and drink plenty of water. If you're unsure about how to do a task, or would like some tips- please just ask. If you are finding a job too difficult, we can try to find you other things to do.

Please read through the additional H&S Information and Risk Assessment given to you at your induction. We have insurance in place which covers volunteers. More details of our insurance is available on request. Our H&S declaration and insurance certificate are displayed in the Kitchen. We need to make sure that all our volunteers have had the right information so that you can start volunteering safely and with confidence:

Please make sure you read the [Volunteer H&S Guide](#) and [Field Risk Assessment](#).

Volunteer complaints and disciplinary procedure

We want to make sure everyone is happy in their volunteering roles. In the unlikely event of a complaint by, or about, a volunteer we have some procedures for dealing with the situation in a fair manner. If you have a complaint against a member of staff or another volunteer, speak to the Volunteer Coordinator or Managing Director. If the issue can't be resolved, we have a volunteer complaints procedure which can be referred to. This can be found in the office. If someone (volunteer, staff member, client or member of the public) has a complaint about a volunteer or their work, they should discuss it with the volunteer and volunteer coordinator. This discussion might highlight training needs, extra support or supervision, or a change of role. If the problem can't be resolved, we have a disciplinary procedure which can be referred to.

How do I register?

If you have read through the information and would like to register please make sure you:

- Read our [Volunteer Field Health and Safety Document](#)
- Read our [Field Risk Assessment](#)
- Read our [Volunteer Covid health and safety information](#)
- Read our [Safe Space promise](#)
- Register via the [online form](#)

At the end of the registration form you will receive a link to our Sign Up.

We recommend saving the link to the sign up sheet as a 'bookmark' on your browser so you can easily return to it.

Volunteer sessions on 'Sign Up' are calendared in advance, so you can plan your own calendar accordingly. When completing this please only sign up to days you can commit to.

Thank you from all of us at The Community Farm. With your help and support we can keep producing the good food we all need.

For any questions regarding volunteering, please contact Emmy, the Engagement Leader, directly via email; volunteer@thecommunityfarm.co.uk.