

## RIDGELINE TRUST VOLUNTEER POLICY

The Ridgeline Trust Therapeutic and Wildlife Garden has a long history of working with volunteers. The project has come about as a result of voluntary efforts by local people.

Volunteers' describe their experiences as rewarding, stimulating, fun, worthwhile and satisfying. Some volunteers have used their volunteering experiences as a springboard into paid employment. Others come to gain confidence and experience in gardening activities. Still more come because they enjoy the social side of working outdoors with others. Whatever the personal goals, Ridgeline welcomes the skills and time which a volunteer can spend with us.

### **Ridgeline Trust values the work of volunteers. The following principles reflect this commitment:**

- Ridgeline Trust ensures that volunteers are effectively integrated into the organisation.
- Ridgeline Trust encourages the involvement of volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds so that our service is representative of the community in Reading and we are able to respond more effectively to local needs.
- Ridgeline Trust expects that staff and volunteers all levels will work positively with other members of the Ridgeline team to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all garden users.
- Ridgeline Trust provides opportunities to help volunteers develop and acquire new skills.
- Working with volunteers increases Ridgeline Trust's contact and involvement with the local community.

Ridgeline can offer a variety of volunteering roles. We will not discriminate against people who have experience of mental or physical health difficulties; we do however ask that volunteers are sympathetic to the needs of those experiencing and recovering from mental and/or physical health problems. To become a regular volunteer with Ridgeline Trust, you must be over 16 years of age. We will offer young volunteers additional supervision and support by matching them with a more experienced volunteer to act as their buddy. We welcome younger volunteers under 16 to help at any of our events, provided that we have permission from their parent or guardian and there is an appropriate role for them.

### **Ridgeline Trust welcomes people:**

- Over 16 years of age (for regular volunteering roles)
- From all ethnic backgrounds
- With physical and sensory and mental health and/or learning disabilities
- With little or no gardening experience or with lots of gardening skills and knowledge!

### **There are three main areas of work volunteers help with:**

Volunteer	Key areas of work	Skills needed
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Position		
<b>Garden Volunteer</b>	General gardening volunteers play an essential role in enabling Ridgeline Trust to support people affected by disability to benefit from gardening activity. General gardening volunteers undertake the maintenance and upkeep of the garden itself. There are a variety of tasks which range from watering, mowing and weeding, to preparing the garden for events and open days and one off landscaping projects. Times can be flexible to suit the volunteer and there is no requirement to attend every session. Sessions are organised on a weekly, monthly and seasonal basis and advertised in the pavilion, on the website and in the regular Ridgeline Trust newsletter.	<b>Willingness to practice, learn, share and/or develop horticultural skills and knowledge.</b> <b>Ability to work with others as part of a team.</b> <b>Being prepared to get involved in whatever tasks need doing.</b> <b>Enjoys a challenge.</b> <b>Patience</b>
<b>Client Support Volunteer</b>	Client Support Volunteers perform a vital role in enabling people affected by disability to take part in gardening activity. By taking part in gardening sessions, people have the opportunity to work towards therapeutic goals as identified and agreed with the horticultural therapist. The role of the volunteer is <b>to support</b> people to undertake gardening activity <b>that will enable</b> them to reach their goals. This is a varied and rewarding role where the support offered can change according to the individual and/or group and over time.	<b>Patience and a nurturing attitude.</b> <b>An interest in gardening</b> <b>Good communication skills</b> <b>A motivational approach</b> <b>Willingness to learn and take part in training as required.</b> <b>Good organisational skills</b> <b>Comfortable taking part in gardening activity alongside Vulnerable adults</b> <b>Able to maintain professional boundaries</b>
<b>Admin support</b>	<b>To work alongside Ridgeline staff or a committee member to help with an identified and agreed list of administration related tasks. The following is not an exhaustive list as the needs of the charity change from time to time but may include:</b> <b>Keeping our contacts database up to date</b> <b>Basic book keeping and managing bills and invoices</b> <b>Taking and circulating minutes of committee meetings</b> <b>Assisting with the organisation of events</b>	<b>Attention to detail, ability to attend committee meetings one evening a month and others as required.</b> <b>Some knowledge and/or experience of basic book keeping.</b> <b>Good computer skills, access to a computer and the internet.</b>

We ask Client Support volunteers for a minimum commitment of three months due to time needed for training and induction and completion of DBS checks  
From time to time we have short term volunteering roles to work on specific projects. We also have opportunities for people who are unable to offer a regular commitment such as events volunteers to help out on garden open days and fundraising events

### **How we recruit volunteers**

Ridgeline Trust will advertise volunteering opportunities through RVA, our website, newsletters, the pavilion noticeboard, by word of mouth and at events across Reading. Anyone who is interested in volunteering will be asked to complete a short volunteer application form outlining their skills, interests and availability. On receipt of the completed form the volunteer will be invited to visit the garden for an informal interview with a member of staff or trustee.

All volunteers will be asked to provide two references, and if possible one should be from a previous employer or volunteering supervisor. These can be from Ridgeline staff, employers past and present social workers, tutors, teachers, or other voluntary organisation. These should be taken up after the interview and before confirmation of the voluntary position. Volunteers may be

invited to attend a trial session to assist both Ridgeline and the prospective volunteer to decide on their suitability for the role.

All volunteers who work directly with clients will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. A criminal conviction is not necessarily a barrier to volunteering with Ridgeline Trust and we would ask potential volunteers to tell us about their criminal record if they have one. The trustees will decide on a case by case basis whether a volunteer with a criminal record is able to volunteer having regard to the following:

- The nature and seriousness of the offence(s)
- The length of time since the conviction
- The relevance of the offence(s) to the role applied for
- Whether the volunteer's circumstances have changed
- The circumstances in which the offence was committed and any explanation offered by the volunteer

### **Induction and ongoing volunteer support**

If the volunteer meets the criteria of the role he/she will be invited to join the Ridgeline team. Where the applicant does not meet the criteria for the role they will be informed in writing and where appropriate they may be offered an alternative volunteering role.

All volunteers will receive a full induction to the organisation which will include:

Background information about the Ridgeline Trust

How volunteers fit in with the organisational structure and decision making process

Basic principles of horticultural therapy

Working with vulnerable adults

Data Protection procedures and policies

Ridgeline policies and procedure

On the job training and for some roles shadowing staff and experienced volunteers

Training may be offered from time to time on specific subjects such as safeguarding vulnerable adults, data protection, disability awareness and horticultural therapeutic practice

### **Insurance**

All volunteers are covered by Ridgeline's Employer's Liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of Ridgeline as long as they are working within the role defined in the task description.

### **Volunteer Expenses**

Ridgeline is keen to involve volunteers with relevant skills and experience regardless of their financial situation. Volunteers are therefore entitled to claim for the cost of their travel and other reasonable expenses associated with their volunteering activity, provided these have been agreed in advance by the manager. For travel expenses to be reimbursed we will require a receipt or ticket and mileage will be reimbursed at the rate of 45p per mile

### **Ridgeline Trust Policies and Procedures:**

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Volunteers with Ridgeline Trust are expected to adhere to the Policies and Procedures of the organisation. It is the responsibility of the volunteer supervisor to ensure that all policies and procedures are read and understood by the volunteers. The following policies are particularly important for volunteers:

**I. Health & Safety.** All volunteers must comply with Ridgeline Trust's Health and Safety policy (which is in the Volunteers 'Policies and Procedures Folder' kept in the Office), whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of Ridgeline Trust. A risk assessment is undertaken for all Ridgeline Trust's volunteering roles and is reviewed every two years.

**II. Equal Opportunities/Diversity.** We pursue equality and fairness in the recruitment of our volunteers and work hard to ensure that no person is discriminated against on the grounds of their gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, disability, religion, belief or age. We monitor our volunteer participation to ensure that our volunteers are broadly representative of the local communities we serve and to ensure that we meet the above aims.

**III. Data Protection and Confidentiality** Ridgeline Trust is committed to the principles of Data Protection and operates a policy for the protection of personal data. No information which Ridgeline Trust holds about its volunteers will be shared with a third party. All paperwork relating to its volunteers will be kept in a locked drawer. The Data Protection Policy is in the Volunteers' Policies and Procedures folder and volunteers will be asked to read it. All volunteers will be given a copy of the policy and asked to sign a data protection/confidentiality agreement

**IV. Risk Assessment.** Consideration is given to the risk issues around any volunteering role at Ridgeline Trust and a Risk Assessment completed for each role as well as a general assessment of the garden environment.

**V. Safeguarding Adults.** Due to the nature of the work undertaken by Ridgeline Trust a Safeguarding Adults policy is in place. This must be read and understood by all volunteers working alongside and coming in to contact with the vulnerable adults whom it serves to support. All volunteers who work alongside or come into regular contact with children and vulnerable adults will attend safeguarding training and will receive refresher every year on our policies and procedures. The Development Manager will keep records of all training undertaken by volunteers

## **VI. Access Policy**

In order to protect our Volunteers, and to be certain that they are covered by our insurance policy, access to the garden by volunteers is at times pre-arranged with a member of staff or one of the trustees. Any volunteer who has access codes to the garden or to any Ridgeline buildings must not pass those codes to anyone else in any circumstances.

## **Procedures for Problems or Complaints**

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If a volunteer is not happy with any aspect of their involvement with Ridgeline Trust, they should first discuss the matter with their supervisor. The supervisor will in all cases try to resolve the matter in the most appropriate manner. It may be necessary to tackle a grievance in a more formal way in which case the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure will be used.

All volunteers are expected to adhere to the policies and uphold the aims of Ridgeline Trust, and, as its representatives, behave in an appropriate manner. If a volunteer behaves, or is suspected to have behaved in a manner likely to cause offence or bring Ridgeline Trust into disrepute, the volunteer's supervisor will discuss the matter with the volunteer in line with the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure. The Chairman has the authority to prevent any individual from volunteering with Ridgeline Trust, although any such decision will be made on objective criteria and within the principles and practices of Ridgeline Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Ridgeline Trust aims to provide a volunteering environment that is enjoyable and rewarding. It welcomes feedback from volunteers on the quality of the volunteering experience it offers.

Policy written January 2013 and approved by trustees.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or in the light of new legislation.

**Reviewed and approved September 2019**

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