



# Volunteering Policy

## About Think Circus

Think Circus SCIO is a charitable organisation based in Edinburgh, Leith. As a community interest organisation, our primary aim is to improve lives through circus, and we offer classes, projects, and events to help people build confidence and new skills.

We work with volunteers because we want to reach out as widely as we can in our local community, helping more people to discover the joy of circus arts. Having different ideas, approaches and experiences all together makes our circus community even better. Volunteers also play a vital role by supporting the children and young people in our sessions and by supporting us in putting on events and activities.

## Policy Statement

We highly value our volunteers and actively encourage their engagement across all levels of our organisation and within suitable activities. Our objective is to provide comprehensive support to our volunteers, addressing any challenges promptly and fairly as they arise.

This policy has been formulated specifically for Think Circus volunteers who contribute within defined roles across our services. It establishes the foundational principles governing the relationship between volunteers and Think Circus, offering essential information about the volunteer experience with us. Furthermore, it serves as a guide, equipping Think Circus employees to effectively engage, supervise, and manage volunteers within their respective service domains.

## Definition of volunteer

Think Circus defines a volunteer as an individual who:

- Donates their time willingly and freely.
- Has successfully undergone the volunteer recruitment, induction and 2-week trial process.

Volunteer's contributions are meant to enhance the organisation's activities rather than replace the responsibilities of paid staff. Volunteers are assigned tasks that are both meaningful and enjoyable, ensuring their positive engagement with Think Circus. The connection between volunteers and Think Circus is grounded in mutual trust and understanding, devoid of any legal binding intent.

## Diversity and Support

At Think Circus, we deeply value diversity and inclusivity. We are committed to providing extra support to individuals who require assistance.

## **Recruitment**

All volunteering opportunities will be promoted through various channels, including Volunteer Edinburgh, our social media platforms, and other well-established volunteering platforms. These opportunities will also be advertised via other promotional materials in our venue and communities.

Prospective volunteers can apply for our available positions using one of the following methods:

- Online Application System: Use our online application system on our official website.
- Application Form Submission: Complete an application form and send it to our volunteer coordinator.
- In-Person Application: Fill out an application form at our venue.

An informal interview will be conducted subsequent to the submission of the application. Additionally, we will verify the volunteer's proof of identification and proof of address during the same process.

As many of our volunteering positions involve interacting with vulnerable individuals, all volunteers are required to provide two referees and disclose information about any past criminal convictions. This self-disclosure form must be completed prior to starting the volunteer role. Additionally, we conduct a risk assessment for each volunteering position, and some roles may require a Disclosure Check. Rest assured, Think Circus will facilitate these checks, and will cover all associated costs.

In cases where applicants are not selected for their initially applied role, they will receive constructive feedback. Furthermore, there may be an opportunity to explore alternative volunteering positions with Think Circus.

## **Induction**

Each volunteer will receive an induction covering general information about Think Circus, health and safety requirements, role-specific descriptions, and the process for providing feedback or lodging complaints regarding their volunteering experience.

## **Volunteer Agreement**

Before starting volunteering, all volunteers will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement, which outlines the mutual expectations between Think Circus and volunteers, and sheds light on what volunteers can anticipate from our side, as well as our aspirations from volunteers.

## **Volunteer Training**

Training will be differed based on different roles and volunteers' experience. For most volunteers, Safeguarding training, Circus Skill training, and Client Liaison training will be provided. We prefer to have long-term volunteering relationships and are able to offer additional opportunities such as masterclasses, SQA-approved training courses, and events for volunteers who have been with us for over one year.

We will have a first-week check-in and 20-hour check-in for our new volunteers. Additionally, there will be a nominated contact who will have regular communication with you to check in on your volunteering experience with us.

## **The Volunteer Voice**

If any volunteer has any concerns related to their volunteering experience or encounters issues with a colleague, it is encouraged that they engage in an informal discussion at their earliest convenience. They can choose to speak with their immediate supervisor, volunteer coordinator, or if the concern pertains to the supervisor, with another manager. It is of utmost importance that the manager receiving the complaint treats it with the necessary gravity and takes proactive steps to address the matter informally. The primary aim is to achieve resolution at this initial stage for the majority of concerns.

If a volunteer find that their concern remains unresolved after informal discussions, they are advised to document the complaint in writing and submit it to their respective line manager. Subsequently, a formal procedure will be set in motion.

All raised concerns and complaints will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be shared among individuals directly involved in the resolution process. Our commitment lies in addressing these concerns and complaints transparently, equitably, and promptly. This not only safeguards the well-being of our volunteers but also ensures minimal disruption to our services and stakeholders.

## **Expenses**

Volunteers generously assist Think Circus by offering their time and expertise without charge. In light of this, it is crucial for Think Circus to provide reimbursement for any incurred out-of-pocket expenses, including travel. Nevertheless, it is essential that all expenses are approved by our paid staff in advance.

## **Attendance**

Volunteers are required to sign in upon arrival and sign out when leaving the premises. In the event that a volunteer is unable to attend an upcoming session, it is highly encouraged that they promptly notify the volunteer coordinator or other designated staff members. This advance notice enables the organisation to effectively reschedule tasks and assignments.

Volunteers have the flexibility to take breaks whenever necessary during their volunteering activities. However, if an extended period of time elapses without volunteering, the volunteer might be requested to participate in a refresher training session. This ensures that volunteers are up to date with the latest information and procedures.

## **End Volunteering**

Upon completion of their service at Think Circus, each volunteer will be invited to complete a feedback form and/or participate in an exit interview. This valuable input will contribute to enhancing the experience for our remaining volunteers. Furthermore, volunteers who have dedicated more than 20 hours with us hold the privilege to request a reference from our organisation.