

Bendrigg Volunteer Policy

Policy owner	Centre Director
Last reviewed/updated on	23.01.2025
Next review	Jan 2026
Related Policies	Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

Bendrigg relies heavily on volunteers for its day-to-day operations and they can help in the following areas:

- Maintenance / grounds
- Office Admin
- Marketing & Fundraising
- Activity Programme
- Domestic & Catering teams

Volunteers can include individuals volunteering on a day or residential basis, work parties from businesses and work experience opportunities for those in education.

This Policy sets out key procedures and guidelines for our volunteer programme, including our 'Bendrigg Alternative' Scheme.

2. Acceptance of Volunteers

Businesses wishing to bring their team as a 'work party' are encouraged to contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator directly to arrange a suitable date and project.

An individual wishing to volunteer at Bendrigg must first complete a Volunteer Application form which is [available on our website](#). Every application is reviewed by our Volunteer Co-ordinator to determine the most appropriate volunteer opportunity for the person in question. Often the Volunteer Co-ordinator will engage in further discussion with the potential volunteer after their original application to gain more insight and understanding as to their skills, aims and objectives.

All volunteers must complete a Medical & Consent form prior to, or on the first day of, their volunteer placement. For regular or returning volunteers, a new Medical & Consent form must be completed annually to ensure details are accurate and up to date. Medical & Consent forms are stored and retained by Bendrigg in accordance with our Privacy and Data Protection Policies.

Bendrigg is an inclusive, accessible and equitable workplace and as such, all potential volunteers are welcome regardless of background, nationality, disability, age, class, gender or religion.

3. Acceptance of Volunteers under the age of 18 years

Volunteers under the age of 18 will be welcome at Bendrigg if the consent of the parent or guardian has been given or if the young person visits as part of a school or organisation.

Volunteers under the age of 18 must be closely supervised by a designated member of Bendrigg or visiting staff. People under 18 years old must not leave the site unsupervised unless approval has been received from their parent/guardian and a Bendrigg member of staff.

Volunteers under the age of 18 are not permitted to drink alcohol whilst volunteering at Bendrigg.

4. Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) Checks

Having previous convictions does not preclude an individual from being able to volunteer at Bendrigg however Bendrigg does need to know about these in order to make appropriate decisions about the suitability of various volunteer roles. Any DBS certificates that come back with convictions will be reviewed by the Volunteer Co-ordinator and/or BA Co-ordinator alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead to determine whether there are any suitable volunteer roles.

To ensure the Health and Safety of our guests, the following policies regarding DBS checks are in place. The only exception to the below, is where volunteers are one-off day volunteers (e.g. volunteering as part of a work party where they will be supervised as part of a planned day of activity).

Every individual volunteer is asked at the application stage whether they hold a current DBS certificate (issued within the last 12 months).

- If they do hold a current certificate, Bendrigg asks to see the original certificate and keeps a record of the issue date.
- If they subscribe to the DBS update service, Bendrigg asks permission to check their certificate details online.
- If they do not have a current DBS certificate issued within the last 12 months, then Bendrigg will initiate a DBS check and the volunteer placement is conditional on this check being completed.

For returning or regular volunteers, DBS checks are renewed every 3 years.

5. Safeguarding

Bendrigg recognises that DBS checks alone are not enough to safeguard our visitors, many of whom are classed as vulnerable. To minimise any safeguarding risks all volunteers must:

- not enter the guest bedrooms
- not be left alone with visitors
- be supervised by Bendrigg staff to ensure professional and appropriate behaviour
- stay in the volunteer accommodation provided, which is separate from the visiting groups (residential volunteers only). There may be exceptions to this due to access requirements. This must be agreed with visiting group leaders in advance.

- not arrange or accept personal visits whilst volunteering (e.g. by family or friends), unless by prior agreement with one of the Senior Management Team
- complete a full induction and Health and Safety briefing with the Volunteer Co-ordinator on arrival. This will include:
 - a site tour and introduction to key members of staff/other volunteers
 - signing a contract agreeing to abide by the Centre Guidelines
 - reading and understanding the Bendrigg Safeguarding Policy
 - what to do in an emergency
 - guidelines of what is expected of them in their role as a volunteer

6. Volunteers through the Bendrigg Alternative Scheme

The Bendrigg Alternative (BA) Scheme has two main benefits:-

- 1) to offer someone who has a history of a criminal offence(s), and those 'at risk' of offending, the opportunity to be of service to others and
- 2) to give someone a helping hand through 'work experience' to get back into education or employment.

Great care is taken with the selection process for a BA volunteer, bearing in mind the vulnerable nature of our visitors and the work involved. Any person who has been convicted or who has a history of the following will automatically be excluded from the scheme:

- arson
- sex offences
- abuse to children
- violence
- current mental health orders or sections.

Each agency does their own risk assessment before a placement is considered with Bendrigg. In many cases, this is then followed up by a pre-placement suitability visit with the BA Co-ordinator.

In addition to the volunteer policy already outlined above, the following additional points must be adhered to. The BA volunteer is:

- not allowed off-site unless with the group or given special permission
- to sign a contract adhering to a no-alcohol / drugs policy and
- to be in their bedroom by midnight