



Karis Neighbour Scheme

Volunteer Policy

**This policy was last reviewed and approved by the
Board of Trustees, August 2026**

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1. Introduction & Team Structure

Karis Neighbour Scheme (KNS) is a registered charity, established and run on Christian principles, managed by a Board of Trustees. As a charity we offer advocacy, befriending, practical and emotional support to people in our local community. Staff and volunteers provide this support at our premises, out in community venues and in client's homes.

The Directors (Trustees) currently employ 19 paid staff members, most working part time hours:

- CEO,
- Administrator,
- Finance and Operations Co-ordinator,
- Fundraiser,
- Children & Families Worker , Family Outreach Worker and Babybank worker,
- Two Karis BeFriends (KBF) Project Workers,
- Men's befriender worker,
- KBF Advice Worker,
- Two Benefit Welfare Advisors,
- Four Chaplains for Wellbeing with the Listening & Guidance service,
- Social Prescribing Link Worker

We also have around 80 volunteers who help in all areas of the charity, working alongside all staff roles. We value our volunteers highly, and the skills and experience they are able to offer towards the development of our projects and activities. We will support, train and encourage our volunteers in their volunteering wherever we can.

2. Volunteer Application Process

We ask you to fill in our application form, giving two references for us to contact. For certain roles you may also be asked to complete a DBS (criminal record) check. You are welcome to visit the project before you start this process so you can meet others already involved and gain a better understanding of what happens. We will usually arrange an informal interview to discuss volunteering with KNS and what role you may be best suited for. Your data will be saved securely in our database so we can contact you about your role, and for any monitoring purposes that our funders require. You can talk to us about how we use our data by contacting harry.naylor@karisneighbourscheme.org

To begin with, there will be an induction period when you will be supervised more closely or work with other experienced volunteers or staff. The first 3 months (depending on how often you volunteer) will be a probationary period. This is to check you are happy being here and if the placement is right for your needs and the project needs.

We accept volunteers on the basis of suitability for the role for which they have applied and follow the guidelines set out in our Safer Recruitment Policy. If you require any specific adjustments to enable or support you whilst volunteering, we will take reasonable measures to do this. Please make your supervisor aware of any adjustments that you require at an early stage of the application process.

KNS insurance covers anyone over 16. In general we offer volunteering to those over 18, but in some circumstances 16-18 year olds can apply. We may require parental permission or have to limit their activities. Young volunteers will be offered more supervision from staff members and may require permission from guardians before being added to Whatsapp groups.

As a volunteer you have a right to stop volunteering at any time, but for certain roles we do ask volunteers to offer a minimum period (i.e. six months for befriending roles). This is to help us check you are suitable for the role and to help the project run smoothly.

Before you start volunteering we ask you to sign our Volunteer Agreement. This explains some of our expectations of you and the commitments we make to you as our volunteer. We will also ask you to read through the Volunteer Guidelines document and make sure you understand everything in it. There may be additional training we ask you to do, either in person or online, to do with your role.

3. Karis Neighbour Scheme activities

Volunteers at KNS can find themselves becoming involved in a range of activities and areas of work. You are not expected to do anything that you do not want to do or that is not suited to your abilities. You may find that opportunities present themselves to step out into new areas, and we find that those who do so often find the tasks and challenges presented worthwhile and enjoyable.

The main areas where our volunteers currently help are :

- befriending older adults
- befriending families
- advocacy
- teaching English or helping with crèche
- practical tasks such as gardening or DIY
- helping at our Babybank
- administration tasks
- driver.

If you would like experience in a different area or have other skills you could offer please let us know.

4. Volunteer Policy

This policy has been written to try and ensure your volunteering is rewarding, safe and enjoyable and that you are aware of how to keep others safe too. It will give insight into some of the problems that may arise and suggest ways of reducing risks whilst working at the project and out in the community.

It is important to realise that many of the people who you will meet at KNS may have experienced inequality, exclusion or hardship. It is part of our values as an organisation that we want everyone to be treated as an individual, who is accepted and welcomed, and with whom we want to build relationship. We find this focus on acceptance, relationship and communication does an awful lot to break down any of the barriers that cultural, social or religious differences may bring.

If you encounter an emergency situation that would mean you are unable to follow the guidance within this or any of our other policies please contact a member of staff and/or a Trustee to discuss the situation as soon as is practically possible and, where able, before taking action. The member of staff or Trustee may advise on alternative courses of action and/or arrange for additional support.

5. Support & Supervision

We seek to provide support and supervision suitable for your role. This will be discussed with you at your volunteer interview and as part of your induction. You will have an assigned supervisor and you will be given their contact details. Although your supervisor is your first point of contact, you may contact any member of staff if you need to talk to someone in an emergency.

We encourage you to ask questions if you are uncertain of anything and welcome your suggestions and thoughts about the work you are involved with. Being able to learn from your experience and opinions can help us improve practice and therefore the welfare of all our volunteers.

Please always feel free to report any inappropriate or worrying behaviour or communication from clients, volunteers or other staff to your supervisor or another staff.

What form supervision will take will vary from role to role, but this will be clarified to you as part of your induction, including any targets or outcomes for you to work towards. If there are any training needs connected to your role these will be considered with you in discussion with your supervisor.

6. Boundaries

While we do look to offer genuine friendship and neighbourly support to the people we are supporting, there is still a need for some clearly defined boundaries to help protect you as a volunteer and the person you are supporting.

- If your contact with someone is for a particular purpose (i.e. doing some DIY in the home) please don't commit yourself or any other team member to taking on any further tasks without first talking to your supervisor.
- If you are befriending an individual, please do remember the main focus of your volunteering is their needs and progress. When introducing yourself to your client, staff

will make clear the expected boundaries (i.e. how often and for how long you will visit, how you will communicate and what you are unable to do). As you develop a relationship, things will inevitably change but we ask that you keep your supervisor informed of any changes.

- Do not feel pressured to do more or be closer to the client than you feel comfortable with. It is important that both you and the client are clear about each other's boundaries. You are not there to meet all their needs and if you have concerns about an individual needing further support please talk to your supervisor.
- With the exception of befriending, we would ask you not to give your contact information (i.e. mobile number/e-mail address) to a client or add them on social media. You should only give your contact details to an individual you are befriending if you feel comfortable doing so - if you have any problems with being contacted excessively or at inappropriate times please let us know and we will talk to the client to try and resolve the issue. There are ways to hide your number when you are calling a client if you would prefer this.
- We ask that no volunteers accept any cash gifts offered to them. A small, relatively inexpensive token of their appreciation or a gift on a special occasion may be accepted, but the line between a gift and a payment should never be crossed. We ask that you inform us of any gifts you receive so we can ensure transparency. Hospitality can also be accepted but do discuss with your supervisor if you have any concerns. Gifts to the charity are gladly accepted but need to be recorded and officially acknowledged, and a judgement should be made as to whether the individual has the capacity to understand the donation they are making.
- Likewise, you should not buy a client expensive gifts. You should **not** give a client money, whether a gift or as a loan - if there is an acute need then please contact the office and we can discuss what other support may be available.

7. Expenses

We will pay volunteers reasonable expenses in connection with their volunteering. We will pay travel costs up to the cost of a daysaver bus ticket (currently £5.50) per day. Volunteer drivers will be reimbursed for mileage driven as part of the volunteering role at a rate of 45p per mile. This should be agreed with your supervisor beforehand.

If you are volunteering for a period of five or more hours continuously, and over at least one mealtime, we will also pay expenses for food. This will be up to a maximum of £5.00. Any other expenses should be discussed with your supervisor in advance.

Please complete a travel claim form or expenses form and remember to keep your ticket or receipts.

8. Resolving Issues

It is our intention that volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience, and this is the case most of the time. We do recognise however, that from time to time problems can arise. We hope most issues can be resolved through discussions between you and your supervisor.

We believe it is always best to try and resolve any issues informally and quickly by having a discussion, preferably in person. Discussions should be open, honest and objective and all information should be treated confidentially.

We want to ensure that we protect you as a volunteer and ensure you are treated in a fair and equal way.

If a volunteer has concerns or worries :

1. You can address your concerns to your supervisor informally;
2. Or you can address your concerns to your supervisor formally – either in writing or by requesting a formal meeting (we will endeavour to arrange this within 14 days of the request):
 - a. This meeting should take place in a quiet place where you are unlikely to be interrupted
 - b. Notes are typed up and circulated within a week of the meeting
 - c. You are allowed sufficient time to talk and to give your perspective
 - d. Possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both sides
 - e. Actions are agreed and a time is arranged to review the actions within 14 days of the meeting
 - f. If concerns are received in writing a response will be sent within 14 days.
3. If you are still not happy, you can address your concerns to the CEO or the Trustee in writing (we will endeavour to respond within 14 days) – at this stage we may arrange further meetings between you and your supervisor to see if the matter can be mediated.
4. Whistleblowing – we have a whistleblowing policy which may be referred to if you are concerned we are not fulfilling our legal duties as a charity, or our general duty of care towards our clients, or we have not taken your concerns seriously.

If a staff member has concerns about a volunteer:

We will normally raise any concerns we have with your volunteering through supervisions or other support mechanisms in place. If there are ongoing concerns or initial solutions are unsuccessful, it may be necessary to have several review meetings. We will consider if there is a need for further support or training, and if you are finding it difficult to carry out your role, are feeling unfulfilled or your needs have changed then we may discuss whether alternative roles might be more appropriate.

If a concern is not resolved, or if the original concern is serious, then you will be invited to a formal meeting with your supervisor (or another member of staff if appropriate). You may choose to have someone accompany you to the meeting if you feel this would be helpful.

In the case of a serious enough concern, for example where there is a substantial risk of harm to others or a breach of trust, you may be suspended temporarily from volunteering pending the outcome of the formal meeting.

Your supervisor will write to you inviting you to a formal meeting. In these circumstances the charity will

1. Ensure you receive a written explanation of the issue along with a copy of the relevant parts of this policy.
2. Ensure you are given enough time to prepare (a minimum of seven days) while also ensuring the meeting takes place as soon as possible.
3. Allow you access to any relevant information relating to the concern.
4. Invite your line manager to the meeting.
5. Ensure any possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both sides.
6. Take notes during the meeting and suggest that you (or whoever is accompanying you) does too.
7. Agree what actions are required to resolve the issue satisfactorily and arrange a suitable time to review the actions.
8. Ensure you understand what will happen if the agreed actions are not met.
9. Consider whether you should be suspended temporarily from volunteering for the charity for a specified period of time to allow for further investigation.

If, following the agreed review, there is no further improvement or change in behaviour then we may have to stop you from volunteering with KNS. This decision should only be made by the CEO or a Trustee. Where possible, we will inform you of this face-to-face and a written confirmation, along with an explanation, will follow.

If you are unhappy with this decision, you can appeal in writing within 14 days, stating the reason for your appeal. This will be considered by the Trustees and they will arrange for an

appeal meeting to take place within 14 days of your appeal letter being received. Following the hearing of the appeal a decision will be notified to you in writing. This decision will be final within the organisation and no further appeal will be considered.

For more information about your rights and the fair treatment of volunteers visit NCVO.org.uk.

9. Confidentiality

As a charity we hold personal information about clients, other volunteers and staff. We are committed to treating this information in a confidential and professional way, in accordance with current GDPR (Data Protection) legislation. This applies to any personal information you may have access to when volunteering – whether about clients, paid staff or other volunteers.

As a rule, any information given to or reviewed in confidence by us for one purpose will not be used for any other purpose, or passed to a third party, without the individual's consent. There are exceptions to this rule – see Safeguarding Policies or ask your supervisor for more information.

Personal information may include addresses and telephone numbers, personal information told to you in conversation (i.e. details of a health condition or family situation), or records such as letters or registers at groups.

You are encouraged to share information about your self with your supervisor or another member of staff for the purpose of seeking support and advice.

If a client asks you to keep something in confidence, please do insist that anything they tell you which may cause you concern will have to be reported to your supervisor. They will have agreed this as part of agreeing to receive support from the charity.

However, information should not normally be shared with anyone outside of KNS in a way that could identify the person(s) concerned. Sharing confidential information inappropriately would lead us to reconsider your suitability to volunteer with KNS. If you have any concerns regarding breaches of confidentiality, please speak to your supervisor as soon as possible.

Dependent on your role we may give you further guidelines on confidentiality as part of your induction and a full copy of our Privacy & Data Protection Policy is available in hard copy at our office.

10. Safeguarding

As a volunteer you may be working with children and/or adults at risk of abuse. If so, you would be expected to read, understand and comply with our Safeguarding policies. These will be made available to you by your supervisor during your induction.

Volunteers are not permitted to work on their own with children – a carer or parent must always be present. If you are put in a difficult situation e.g. a parent asks you to mind the child while they pop out to the shop, make clear that you cannot be responsible for the child and that the parent must keep care of the child. Do not worry about causing offence – hopefully the person involved will have enough experience of the charity to know that our intentions are good.

If you have a concern relating to safeguarding you should talk to your supervisor and make a written note about the concern as soon as possible.

You, as a member of the public, retain responsibility to report serious concerns or incidents to the police (999) or to a Social Worker (call Adults and Communities Access Point 0121 303 1234). You should always do so if it's an emergency and you are unable to reach a member of staff, or if you believe that we are not handling any concerns raised appropriately.

Full copies of our safeguarding policies are available in hard copy at our office.

If allegations are made against you it is crucial that you report them to your supervisor or another member of staff as soon as possible. We will make a written record and file it confidentially for reference and appropriate action will be taken.

11. Health & Safety

The Health & Safety of all those involved in KNS is a priority. As a volunteer, you will be made aware of relevant sections of our Health & Safety policy in your induction and should read and understand our Health & Safety Guidelines for Volunteers (provided in your volunteer pack). For further information you can see the complete policy which is available in hard copy at our office.

As a volunteer, you are covered under our charity insurance and we have a duty of care to look after anyone on our premises or involved in activities run by the charity. Copies of our insurance policies can be read at our main office.

12. Driving in Own Car

For some volunteering roles, you may be asked to drive your own car/vehicle. If this is something you are happy to do, please ensure you read and understand our Driving guidelines (provided in your volunteer pack). Please keep a record of your journey with mileage, date and purpose of the trip so we can reimburse your travel expenses.

13. Equal Opportunities

KNS was established on the ethos of 'karis /charis', in Greek, which means 'grace'. Grace is the giving and receiving of unearned loving kindness and acceptance. This is one of the key values which shapes what we do as a charity. We are committed to the equal treatment of all people within our work, this applies to you as a volunteer and to those you come into contact with through your volunteering.

We ask you to conduct yourself in a considerate manner at all times. Behaviour that is considered to be discriminatory – for example discrimination based on a person's race, nationality, religious beliefs or sexual orientation – would lead us to reconsider your suitability to volunteer with KNS.

If you feel you have experienced any form of discrimination in your volunteering we would ask you raise this as soon as possible with your supervisor. We encourage the resolution of misunderstandings and problems informally, wherever possible.

The full Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy is available in hard copy at our office.

14. Related policies and documents:

- Volunteer Guidelines
- Safeguarding (adults and children)
- Safer recruitment
- Complaints procedure
- IT, Social Media and Cyber Security
- Grievance and disciplinary procedure
- Privacy and data protection
- Health and Safety policy
- Driving Guidelines
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion