

University of St Andrews
School of Computer Science
Digital Inclusion in Later Life Project

Volunteer Policy

1. Purpose of policy

This volunteer policy aims to provide a framework for the recruitment, development, deployment, protection and benefit of volunteers with the Digital Inclusion in Later Life Project at the University of St Andrews.

2. Context: the Digital Inclusion in Later Life project

The growing digitalisation of essential services increasingly necessitates the use of digital resources. Routine tasks in everyday life now typically require the ability to use systems aimed at a digitally literate population. Literature suggests that digital literacy is inversely related to age. While older adults are not homogeneous in their abilities and attitudes, the consequences of ageing can affect the ability of this group to adopt diverse and fast evolving digital technologies. Yet, these technologies are increasingly needed to improve the quality of life and preserve the independence of older adults.

This research project aims to improve the digital inclusion of adults in later life through:

- creating resources to improve the digital literacy of older adults in our communities,
- producing guidance for software and interaction designers in developing digital services that are more accessible to older adults, and
- providing support for those who support older adults with digital access.

We work in collaboration with local organisations and using iterative co-design processes to address this challenge.

The research project attempts to find medium and long term solutions to improving digital inclusion among older adults. However, our work has shown an immediate need and demand for support in accessing digital services and resources among older adults in St Andrews. This volunteer initiative is intended to address this need.

We will organise regular digital support sessions in local community spaces (such as the North East Fife Community Hub and the town library in St Andrews), during which volunteers will support and advise older adults on accessing digital services via their devices. Both students and staff from the University can volunteer for these sessions.

3. Benefits of volunteers to older people in the community

Volunteers are vital to this part of the project.

- Volunteers bring knowledge, skills and experience that can help older adults with their queries relating to digital technologies, and increase their confidence in using these technologies.
- By offering volunteer-supported sessions, we inspire and support adult learning and independence, providing tangible benefit to our community.
- Volunteers enhance our ability to communicate and engage with the public, and achieve impact that may not be possible otherwise.
- More broadly, volunteers help highlight the work being done in the University to the wider community.

4. Benefits of volunteering to the volunteer

Volunteering provides a variety of benefits to the individuals who participate. These may include:

- An opportunity to make a difference to the local community,
- An opportunity to gain new skills and experience,
- Enhancements to the CV,
- Enjoyment and satisfaction from participating in an initiative for public benefit,
- Social engagement with the local community, other volunteers and staff, and
- Provision of references on request.

Volunteering should be mutually beneficial. Staff from the Digital Inclusion project will work to ensure that volunteer work is a fulfilling opportunity for all who give their time.

5. Who can volunteer?

Any member of staff or student at the University of St Andrews can apply to volunteer with the project. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old.

Although volunteering with the Digital Inclusion project is unpaid, volunteers from overseas will need to demonstrate that they have the right to work in the UK before taking part in this initiative. Project staff will need to see proof of right to work and may consult or share copies of documents with the Human Resources or Registry services of the University of St Andrews as part of this process to ensure all volunteers have the correct visa status.

Overseas students on a student visa should be aware that volunteering with us will count towards the number of hours that they work as permitted by their visa.

It is the responsibility of volunteers to ensure that they comply with the terms of their visa or other permission to reside in the UK. Advice on these matters can be obtained from Human Resources for staff and Registry for students.

6. Recruitment and selection

Recruitment

Volunteering opportunities will be advertised via relevant student societies and weekly memos to students and staff, and publicised through local volunteering organisations. Information will be circulated in a manner that ensures a wide variety of people are able to hear about and participate in this volunteering opportunity.

Application

Staff and students interested in volunteering with the Digital Inclusion project should complete an online application form, and may be required to take part in an informal interview.

For selected candidates, references may be taken up, and right-to-work checks will be conducted before their place in the initiative is confirmed.

7. Protection of vulnerable groups

While our support sessions are not intended specifically for vulnerable groups, it is possible some of the older adults who attend the sessions may belong to vulnerable groups. Therefore, all volunteers will undergo Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks with the help of one of the local community partners of this initiative before they begin volunteering with the project.

By applying for this opportunity, volunteers give permission for their details to be shared for this purpose.

PVG disclosure checks will be conducted through Volunteer Scotland by North East Fife Community Hub, which is a local community partner in this initiative. In-person identity check sessions will be organised with the PVG Coordinator of the Community Hub. Volunteers will be required to bring the following the documents to one of the identity check sessions:

- An official letter showing current address and matriculation card (students)
- Passport, driving license and a council tax bill – or equivalent 3 items of id (staff)

Once identity checks are carried out, the PVG Coordinator will pass on the contact details to Volunteer Scotland, who will contact each volunteer directly for any further information required. The PVG Coordinator or project staff will not see any of the additional information required.

8. Induction, support and development

The Principal Investigator (PI) of the Digital Inclusion project will have responsibility for organising induction for volunteers. The PI or another named member of staff of the University of St Andrews will have oversight of the work of each volunteer and ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Volunteers will speak to one of these staff on a regular basis throughout their association with the project, and can share any concerns or feedback during these discussions.

9. Time commitments

Each support session will have a specified time commitment. This will be included in the role description.

10. Out-of-pocket expenses

All the support sessions will take place in St Andrews, and it is expected that no travel or other expenditure will be incurred by volunteers.

Volunteers are not expected to use their own money to purchase any resources required for their role. It is the responsibility of the Digital Inclusion project to ensure that volunteers are suitably equipped.

As a voluntary activity, this role is understood to be outwith the National Minimum Wage legislation. If the circumstances of the role were to change such that it is no longer a volunteer activity, the project will abide by National Minimum Wage legislation, if applicable.

11. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the University's Public Liability Insurance for the activities that they carry out as directed by the PI of the Digital Inclusion project.

12. Unspent criminal convictions

As part of the registration process, volunteers will be asked whether they have any unspent criminal convictions. Any student, who has such convictions, will be referred to the University Student Conduct Officer for risk assessment in the context of this project. Similarly, any staff with such convictions will be referred to HR for risk assessment. Anyone who presents a risk that cannot be mitigated will not be chosen to volunteer with the project.

13. Data protection

While a volunteer does not have the same protections and legal status that an employee has, the reasons for collecting and making use of the data of volunteers who undertake unpaid work for the University are similar to those for paid employees. The University Privacy notice sets out how personal data are used, the rights of the volunteer, and how those rights can be applied:

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/assets/university/data-protection/employee-privacy-notice.pdf>.

14. Information security

No personal data will be collected from participants (older adults) during support sessions. Volunteers will not have access to any stored information about participants. Volunteers will receive information security training as part of their induction, and are expected to maintain the confidentiality of any sensitive data that they may encounter.

At the end of each session, participants will be asked to complete a feedback form, which includes confirmation that they have not shared any sensitive information with volunteers.

15. Disputes between volunteers and the Digital Inclusion project

Where a volunteer has a complaint or concern they should raise this with the PI or another member of staff associated with the project in the first instance. If the complaint is about a member of staff, they should raise it with the Human Resources service of the University of St Andrews.

Where a dispute arises, this will be discussed informally by the relevant parties, with reference to the volunteer code of conduct for issues around volunteers and/or the University's grievance guidance for issues around a member of staff. Volunteers will meet regularly with a named member of staff to discuss their role. It is hoped these informal discussions will prevent serious problems arising. Where volunteer behaviour is not of an appropriate standard, a placement may be ended.

16. Health and safety

Volunteers are expected to follow the University's health and safety procedures. All general health and safety issues and procedures will be included in the general induction that volunteers receive.

Volunteers will also receive health and safety training in relation to the specific tasks they carry out and will be expected to read and sign all relevant risk assessments. Volunteers who have concerns or questions relating to health and safety should raise these with the PI of the Digital Inclusion project.

17. Wellbeing

For advice and support regarding wellbeing, student volunteers should contact the Advice and Support Centre and staff volunteers should contact the Occupational Health service.

18. Equality and diversity

The Digital Inclusion project is committed to equality and diversity. Volunteering opportunities are open to all who meet eligibility criteria and where reasonable adjustments or additional support are required to enable an individual to volunteer, measures will be put in place to the best of our ability. Volunteering opportunities will be publicised through a variety of channels to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to get involved.

19. Internal responsibilities for volunteers

The PI of the project or another named member of staff will have the following responsibilities:

- Preparing role description
- Arranging the advertising of voluntary roles
- Handling the application process, including receiving volunteer applications
- Selecting volunteers from among applicants
- Arranging the initial induction of volunteers
- Supervising and managing volunteers
- Arranging any task specific training
- Ensuring the safety of volunteers.

20. Evaluation

All volunteering opportunities will be evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community and that opportunities are engaging and rewarding for participants. Surveys will be conducted with all volunteers at the end of their placement.

21. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis while the programme is being established and is next due for review in July 2025.

22. Contact

If you have any queries about the initiative, please email digital-inclusion@st-andrews.ac.uk .

Acknowledgement

This policy is based on the [Museums Volunteer Policy](#) with kind permission from the Learning and Engagement team of University of St Andrews museums.

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