



3.5 VOLUNTEER POLICY

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FarmAbility is the working title of the Farm Inspiration Trust, UK registered charity no. 1153282
<http://farminspirationtrust.org/>

We believe that adults with learning disabilities and autism should have access to meaningful activities that improve their well-being and increase their independence, enabling them to participate actively in their communities.

FarmAbility, The Field Station Wytham, OX2 8QJ Tel: 01865 245604
Trustees: Richard Brooks (Chair), Will Gale (Treasurer), Ruth Layton, Roz Warren, Wendy Tindsley



1. FarmAbility: who we are, what we do and why we have volunteers

FarmAbility is a programme of the charity, The Farm Inspiration Trust.

FarmAbility provides a day service, currently 4 days a week, for adults with learning disabilities and autism on a working farm in Wytham. 'Co-farmers' attend for 1-3 sessions per week, and take part in a wide variety of farm-based jobs, including animal husbandry, horticulture, cooking with fresh produce and seasonal tasks. Many of these activities involve working in a team, in the open air, and all promote good mental and physical health. FarmAbility's aim is to enable co-farmers to learn new skills, and build their confidence and self-esteem through meaningful activities, while having fun in a supportive and empathetic environment.

We believe that volunteers enhance and strengthen our aims by providing additional support and encouragement to co-farmers as they carry out their tasks, and enabling a more focused, high ratio level of support. Volunteers bring a positive social dimension to day sessions; they offer new opportunities for co-farmers to interact with a wide range of people in a supportive and fun way. Volunteers themselves can benefit hugely from the skills and experience they build at FarmAbility.

2. Using volunteers in our work

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We value volunteers with 'generalist' backgrounds and skills, as well as volunteers with specialist skills (i.e. horticulture, horse care, carpentry). While skills sets and experience may differ, all our volunteers share an interest in and commitment to supporting adults with autism and learning disabilities in a positive, empowering way. Although all our day sessions run with sufficient paid staff to ensure our co-farmers' supports needs are met, volunteers work alongside co-farmers and can help them achieve even more in the activity by providing another layer of individual support. Volunteers with specialist skills can help us to increase the diversity of activities during day sessions, and they can provide valuable advice and guidance in specific areas of farm-based work. In this way, we use volunteers to enhance our service provision, delivered by paid sessional workers.

3. Recruiting volunteers

Details of our need for volunteers are displayed on our website; this is updated as needs change (for example, when we are looking for volunteers with specific skills). Interested candidates can contact us by email or phone for a volunteer application form and to arrange a visit to the farm to look around and see what we do. Applicants can complete the application form either before or after their initial visit, but once completed, they will attend an interview offering both sides to explore the candidate's suitability.

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Applicants provide contact details for two referees, who will be contacted by the volunteer manager. If the applicant is successful they will be required to complete a DBS form before they start. Once cleared by the DBS the volunteer will agree with FarmAbility's Volunteer Manager, what days and times they would like to volunteer. All volunteers complete a 6 week probationary period following which the volunteer and volunteer manager will meet to discuss the volunteer and FarmAbility's mutual suitability to each other.

Volunteers may find us through other routes (i.e. word of mouth, following an event or media feature), but they still follow the same application process.

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4. Volunteer roles at FarmAbility

A. Volunteer role (general)

Volunteers in a general role work during our day sessions on Mondays to Fridays (10:00-16:00)¹, supporting the sessional worker with overall responsibility for that day. A typical role would include:

- Meeting our co-farmers as they arrive
- Supporting them to prepare for the session (changing into suitable clothing and footwear, leaving their lunch in an appropriate place)
- Joining the initial session where the day's activities are outlined
- Providing encouragement and support where needed to co-farmer(s), during a varied range of agreed activities during the day, enabling co-farmer(s) to engage in the task as independently as possible.
- Volunteers may be required to work with or without co-farmers independently from the sessional worker. This would be agreed with volunteers in advance and volunteers would be required to follow the direction of the sessional worker.
- Supporting the responsible sessional worker with ad hoc requests throughout the day (i.e. organising equipment and resources on the farm, and other tasks relating to activities as they arise)
- Clearing up at the end of the session with co-farmers, other volunteers and the sessional worker as appropriate

¹ Flexibility with hours can be possible, if this still meets FarmAbility's needs
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- An opportunity to have a short debrief at the end of each day with JP.

B. Volunteer role (specific skills)

Volunteers who come to work on specific projects (i.e. woodwork, gardening, cookery, fibre arts) are more likely to choose a specified time on a day when the project is happening – i.e. for a 2-hour carpentry session on one or more days during the week. A typical specialist role would include:

- (a) Working with the responsible sessional worker to identify what resources are needed for the project
- (b) Outlining, with the sessional worker, what processes are needed for the project and agreeing how these will be organised during a session
- (c) Arriving in good time before a project session to set up
- (d) Leading the session, with the sessional worker, providing explanation and support to co-farmers to engage with the project/activity. Volunteers may be required to lead small groups independently.
- (e) Clearing up at the end of the session with co-farmers, other volunteers and the sessional worker as appropriate
- (f) An opportunity to have a short debrief at the end of each session with JP.

5. **Equal Opportunities & Diversity at FarmAbility**

FarmAbility aims to ensure that no volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, gender orientation, nationality, religion or belief (or lack of belief), ethnic or national origin, age, gender, gender reassignment or marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

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Criteria and procedures for recruiting volunteers are regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. All volunteers will be given equal opportunity and support within FarmAbility.

FarmAbility is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work, and we believe that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity.

6. Inducting and training volunteers

All FarmAbility volunteers will have an induction during their first month, covering the following areas:

- FarmAbility, who we are and what we do
- Tour of the farm to familiarise them with the facilities and the animals
- Meeting co-farmers, sessional workers and key farm staff
- The Volunteer Manager will go through the following key policies with all volunteers:
 - Health & Safety on the farm
 - General Farm risk assessment, and specific ones as these are developed for particular activities (i.e. gardening, cookery)
 - Our policy for working with vulnerable adults

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- Our volunteer policy
- Volunteers will be asked to sign our volunteer agreement.

FarmAbility is committed to ensuring that volunteers feel adequately trained for the role they provide, and aims to raise funds for a training budget that volunteers can access, if they would like further training in an area relevant to our work that will directly benefit the project. This will be agreed in discussion with our Volunteer Manager. Experienced sessional workers are always willing to offer guidance and advice where needed to volunteers. Periodically, we are able to offer short training sessions in subjects relevant to our programme – for example, 'Making Sense of Autism'.

7. Volunteer expenses

FarmAbility is keen that travel costs should not prevent a volunteer from supporting the project, and we are committed to paying volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses, most importantly travel expenses to and from the farm. We are able to cover car and bicycle mileage (between the farm and where you live) and out of pocket expenses when agreed in advance.

8. Support and supervision of volunteers

We are committed to ensuring that volunteers feel supported during their time with us, and that they are aware of that we value and appreciate their contribution. On a daily basis, volunteers are supported by the responsible sessional worker who will respond to any immediate issues as required. In addition an opportunity for volunteers to have a short debrief at the end of each

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day will be provided. However, all volunteers are also supported by our Volunteer Manager, and will receive regular supervision sessions to review how the volunteer is feeling, and to discuss any issues or problems that may arise. Supervision sessions will take place every three months, at a time/place agreed between the volunteer and Volunteer Manager, either face-to-face or by phone.

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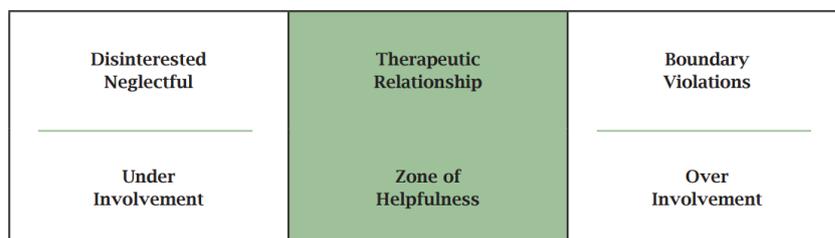
9. Safeguarding at FarmAbility

FarmAbility has a Safeguarding policy for working with Vulnerable Adults. This should be sent

10. Boundaries at FarmAbility

1.1 At FarmAbility we are involved in providing day services for adults and children with autism and learning disabilities. The team are also required to regularly work alongside and liaise with, parents, carers and professionals involved with co-farmers.

1.2 At FarmAbility we recognise the huge benefits that good therapeutic relationships between the team and co-farmers can bring in terms of encouraging engagement, fostering a sense of being understood and valued, and in delivering person-centred support. We want to protect these therapeutic relationships in order to maintain the unique environment and atmosphere of FarmAbility. We do however recognise the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries within these therapeutic relationships in order to deliver a service which is safe, effective and equitable for everybody. We want the FarmAbility approach to remain in the zone of helpfulness (please see below).



1.3 This policy is based on the College of Occupational Therapists Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2015), which contains guidance for Occupational Therapists on maintaining personal and professional boundaries. This policy

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is also based on the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC): Conduct Performance and Ethics (2016). HCPC regulates health care professionals, to protect the public.

1.4 This policy has been developed to assist the team to maintain their personal and professional boundaries at and away from work.

1.5 This policy has also been developed to assist the team to understand the standards of conduct that students on placement at FarmAbility are expected to uphold.

2. Why it is important to maintain professional boundaries:

2.1 To role-model healthy communication and professional relationships to co-farmers.

2.2 To avoid the team's judgement becoming impaired leading to advantageous or disadvantageous treatment of a co-farmer.

2.3 To avoid 'burn-out'/'compassion fatigue' where by a member of the team gives so much to others without exercising self-care that they become physically and emotionally exhausted. This will help maintain physical and emotional safety for everyone.

2.4 To avoid entering into the 'rescuer' role, and as a consequence seeing the co-farmer as a victim (see Karpman drama triangle – brief summary in the appendix for further information).

2.5 To ensure that co-farmers receive appropriate and helpful services, to prevent the co-farmer from feeling betrayed, abandoned, and/or poorly served and to increase the likelihood of co-farmers accepting future services.

2.6 For students on placement: to promote good practice in order to ensure appropriate behaviour as a future professional.

3. How to maintain professional boundaries:

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3.1 Co-farmers should not be perceived or referred to as friends:

- Co-farmers should be encouraged to refer to the teams members in appropriate ways i.e. as a programme leader or supporter.
- Co-farmers should be supported to display alternative behaviours when relating to others i.e. instead of a hug use a handshake.

3.2 Do not use co-farmers for social or emotional support as you might a friend or colleague. For example; do not 'offload' to or ask for advice from co-farmers about personal or work issues.

3.3 Do not give or receive gifts:

- FarmAbility may wish to provide essential (non-monetary) items to a co-farmer in need, i.e. a hat or warm coat. On these occasions it will be made very clear to all parties that the item is being given from FarmAbility as opposed to from an individual member of the team;
- If a co-farmer wishes to give a small gift (worth less than £5) to a member of the team, they should be encouraged to give it to the FarmAbility staff team as a whole so that the gift can be shared equally between all members.

3.4 Do not give or receive personal information such as address, phone number, e-mail to enable contact with co-farmers, their parents or guardians outside of work hours. Occasional contact with these parties may be authorised in advance by the management team for activities that relate to FarmAbility or the work of the Farm Inspiration Trust.

3.5 Do not socialise with co-farmers, their parents or guardians outside of work hours. Occasional contact with these parties may be authorised in advance by the management team for activities that relate to FarmAbility or the work of the Farm Inspiration Trust.

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3.6 Do not store photographs, video or other multimedia relating to co-farmers on your phone.

3.7 Do not discuss co-farmers or their circumstances excessively outside of work, unless furthering the work of FarmAbility and/or the Farm Inspiration Trust. In these instances names should not be used.

4. Strategies to prevent boundary transgressions.

4.1 Use debriefs, supervisions or speak privately with JP, Sarah or Liv to discuss any emerging boundary issues or when it is unclear whether boundaries have been crossed.

4.2 The team is expected to take responsibility to not only uphold their own boundaries but to support other members of the team to recognise and/or manage situations where boundaries have been crossed or appear to be at risk of being crossed:

- If you feel that the individual is not receptive to this support, raise your concerns with JP, Sarah or Liv;
- If you feel that the boundary transgression has evolved into a safeguarding issue follow the safeguarding procedure.

11. Insurance

All volunteers are insured while on the farm, under the FIT Public & Product Liability Insurance, a copy of which can be viewed in The Old Dairy office.

12. Health & Safety of volunteers

FarmAbility is committed to ensuring that volunteers are not exposed to risks to their health or safety in all the activities we undertake on the farm. In addition, we expect volunteers to take reasonable precautions as they carry out activities and to follow guidance for H&S procedures such as regular hand washing,

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wearing appropriate clothing, and behaving appropriately around animals and farm machinery. All volunteers are required to read and fully understand our general risk assessment for being on and moving around the farm, in addition we have several activity-specific risk assessments (RAs) to reflect the content of our typical day sessions (as new ones are developed, these will be reviewed with volunteers); existing RAs are held in a folder in the Old Dairy office and will be reviewed with volunteers regularly. These will be shared with all volunteers and reviewed together regularly – including with co-farmers. Any specific H&S threats that arise will be responded to accordingly.

13. Grievance and disciplinary measures

We believe it is important that clear procedures are in place for any volunteer who has a grievance, and for FarmAbility to be able to respond to anyone demonstrating inappropriate behaviour. If any volunteer has a grievance/complaint or concern, they should first raise this with the Volunteer Manager (or if it involves the Volunteer Manager, then the Programme Director). If the Volunteer Manager has any concerns about a volunteer's behaviour, she will raise this directly with the volunteer.

If the grievance/complaint or concern is raised in writing (including via e-mail) it is our intention we will respond to you within seven working days. If a full response cannot be given within seven working days (e.g. when a matter is very complex or where we have to consult a third party on the matter) you will be informed of the progress being made.

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14. Confidentiality

FarmAbility aims to ensure a supportive and sensitive environment which fosters a sense of security and belonging for all those who take part in our programme on the farm. Respecting the confidentiality of all stakeholders in FarmAbility day sessions is therefore important. FarmAbility expects all volunteers to respect the need for confidentiality of information held about anyone who comes into contact with the programme, particularly co-farmers, and about any programme business. This is expected to continue even when contact has ceased with a co-farmer, and when the volunteer no longer comes to FarmAbility.

15. Data Protection

In order to fulfil its work, FarmAbility needs to store some personal information about its volunteers. This will be stored securely according to FarmAbility's Data Protection Policy and the General Data Protection Regulations. Data about volunteers will be stored for a reasonable length of time after a volunteer ceases volunteering with FarmAbility, after which it will be destroyed. If a volunteer has any questions about what data of theirs is stored and how, they should contact JP.

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