

the community farm



Volunteering Handbook

2025



Contact information:

Address

The Community Farm, Denny Lane, Chew Magna, BS40 8SZ

Office hours

Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm

Contact details

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Welcome!

We are so glad you are joining our community at The Community Farm. This document tells you the basic information you need. Anything else – just ask! 😊

Who's volunteering for?

Encouraging people onto The Farm is one of our core aims and we're proud to have become a real hub of local activity, bringing people together for education, work and play in an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive. As we've grown, so have the numbers of volunteers, and we now welcome more than 1,500 people onto The Farm every year.

We believe that just as biodiversity strengthens ecosystems, a diverse community enriches our farm, bringing resilience, creativity, and deeper understanding. We strive to promote equity and inclusion to harness the full potential of our diverse community. You can find out more in our Safe Space Promise at the end of this document (Appendix 2).

How do I find The Community Farm?

We are about 12 miles south of Bristol, overlooking Chew Valley Lake. Our entrance is on Denny Lane, fifty yards from where Denny Lane meets Walley Lane (opposite the entrance to Chew Valley Lake/Salt & Malt). You can park in the car park as soon as you drive through the gate (it's fine to park on the grass if there are a lot of cars).

If using [Google Maps](#) or SatNav, please be aware that the postcode often doesn't bring you far enough over Denny Lane. The location for our entrance is `///escorting.dolphin.snug` on [What3words](#).

We have a WhatsApp group for volunteers which you can post in to ask for / offer lifts as needed.

It's not easy to reach the Farm by public transport, but the new [WestLink flexible bus service](#) might be an option if you live within their operating areas – you need to book for this. The Farm is located within the Chew Valley zone and there is a WestLink stop on Walley Lane near the entrance to Chew Valley Lake. We recommend using [Travel West's journey planner](#) to plan your route.

If you're a keen cyclist, you can cycle out to the Farm! We have safe spaces to store your bike and a place to change when you get here. We can reimburse reasonable travel expenses if needed.

When does volunteering happen?

Field Volunteering Sessions (Tuesdays & Thursdays, all year round)

Our 'classic' offer – join us out in the fields/polytunnels for all aspects of tending to our crops, from planting & weeding to harvest – 10am – 3.30pm. Head to the [Sign Up website](#) to book.

Community Farmer Days (certain Saturdays, March – November):

Our flagship dates, similar to Tuesdays & Thursdays! Field tasks with up to 30 people, open to all ages, creating a great community vibe – 10am–3pm. Dates and booking details are posted on our [website](#) at the start of the growing season (booking is via Eventbrite).

Wildlife Surveying (ad hoc, March–October):

We also have regular opportunities to help us survey the wildlife on the Farm – no experience needed (for bumblebees or butterflies), we're all amateurs, learning as we go! Some of these activities are weather dependent.

- **Bumblebee surveys – once a month (March – October)** – usually taking around 1 – 1.5 hours to complete, we vary the days of the week over the months. We usually start at 11am.
- **Butterfly Surveys – once a week (April – September)** – day and time changes each week (has to match best weather!) so we use a separate WhatsApp group for these – let us know if you'd like to be involved.

Other ways to get involved:

Some of our experienced volunteers come and help in the warehouse or on the field on other weekdays too, by arrangement.

- **Picking and Packing with the Field Team (Mondays in the busy season)** – helping the field team harvest and pack produce (outdoors, then indoors) – you could join the team at either: 8am, 10am, or 1pm, for a few hours, or longer – as suits.
- **Warehouse Volunteers (Mondays & Tuesdays)** – helping in the warehouse with weighing and pre-packing produce (indoors).

Can I just turn up?

No. All volunteering happens in these dedicated sessions or by special arrangement for group visits etc., but as you can see, there's plenty of opportunities to get involved!

How do I register as a volunteer?

We have a simple online Registration Form that we ask all our volunteers, including our Saturday Community Farmers, to complete. This is important so that we know contact details, any special needs, and next of kin. The form is [here](#) on our website. All information is confidential, held securely and used only in accordance with Data Protection requirements.

What can I expect on my first visit?

You will have already received a Welcome Email when you registered as a volunteer on our website, and on your first visit to the Farm you'll receive yet another warm welcome! The member of staff looking after volunteers on that day will meet you and help you settle in. If it is a Saturday Community Farmer day everyone gathers for a cuppa, and then there is a welcome and a briefing. If it is your first day as a Tuesday or Thursday volunteer then one of us will show you around. We will make sure we have your Registration Form, provide you with Health and Safety information, introduce you to the other volunteers, generally 'show you the ropes' and answer any questions you may have.

Do I need any special experience or abilities?

Nope! It is outdoor work, it is muddy, and it is physical, but we try and fit the tasks to the person/group. Some people love to do vigorous digging, whilst others prefer gentler jobs like harvesting or planting. We explain and demonstrate all the jobs carefully at the beginning of each task, and you will always be working alongside a member of staff or another volunteer who has experience. We also explain each tool and how to use it safely and efficiently.

Some of our volunteers love to work in a team, and enjoy the chat. Others are glad of some peace and serenity. Again, you can fit what you do to how you are feeling. We try hard to make The Farm a great space for positive conversation.

Do I need to come every week, and do I need to commit for a set length of time?

Nope, we just ask that you let us know the days you can come (by booking) and let us know if you can no longer make it. There is no set minimum for how long you need to come, although for field volunteers it's great if you can commit to come on at least five days in the first instance. Many of our volunteers have been with us for years, some even since the Farm began in 2010! If you need to leave early, or you're running late – please just let the leader know.

What does a typical volunteering day involve?

We always begin with hellos, settling in, and welcoming everyone. We explain the shape of the day, then we get started. Sometimes you will be working in pairs or small groups, and sometimes we have tasks (like moving the giant meshes!) where a dozen or so people may work together. We generally stop for a lunch break at around 12.30pm, then get stuck into some more tasks in the afternoon. We stop in time to pack away the tools and tidy up, and if there are any 'grade-out' vegetables (also known as 'Veg on the edge!') then you can collect some to take home. Then we all say goodbye and thank you!

Will I receive any training?

There is lots of learning on the job, with questions and answers happening constantly in conversation with our very experienced and passionate staff. We also run occasional training events covering topics like apple tree pruning, propagation or compost making. Several times a year we have a get together to which all of our volunteers are invited, where the staff explain the crop plans, review the past growing season, and so on.

What if I have health or mobility issues?

If you have any health or mobility issues that we need to be aware of then please get in touch with us so that we can discuss this with you and work out what might be possible. We can, within certain limits, offer a range of volunteering tasks. We also offer [wellbeing programmes](#) that involve gentler and more supervised farm-related activities. We can sometimes accommodate individuals who come with a support worker.

What do I need to bring?

The essentials are;

- Work gloves – for protecting your hands – please bring your own if you can. If you don't have any then we can provide them.
- Strong boots or shoes to protect your feet are important even in summer, and wellies in very wet and muddy weather (we do have spares if needed).
- Clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.
- Waterproofs for wet weather, including waterproof trousers (we do have spares if needed).
- Plenty of warm layers in winter, as we are outdoors nearly all of the time.
- Sunhats and sun protection cream in sunny weather.
- A packed lunch, and snacks to last you through the day (feel free to bring treats to share if you wish!).
- A water bottle especially in hot weather, and a flask of hot drink on cold days.

Can children come with me?

You cannot bring children with you for Tuesday and Thursday field volunteering because we are a busy working farm, with vehicles and equipment moving around the site.

Saturday Community Farmer Days are family-friendly, and you can bring children and young people of any age, so long as they are happy to be outdoors and to help (or play) alongside adults who are engaged in a field task. You can provide this information when booking online.

What health and safety issues do I need to be aware of?

Farms are full of potential hazards and we ask that all volunteers co-operate with us to ensure that everyone is safe. The most important things are to;

- Listen carefully to the health and safety briefing at the start of each task.
- Be aware of and follow our Golden Rules for Health and Safety (see below).
- The Farm has a General and Specific Risk Assessment which is updated each December/January which all staff should be familiar with. The main headings relevant to volunteers are in Appendix 1. If you would like to read the full Risk Assessment, please speak to a member of staff who can show you to a printed copy in the Warehouse kitchen.
- If a task feels too strenuous for you then please say, and do take breaks when you need to (and drink lots of water!).

The Golden Rules, as they apply to volunteers, are;

- If you notice something hazardous tell a member of staff, and if relevant, help make sure something is done about it, e.g. sharp knives lying on the ground, a fellow volunteer following unsafe technique, someone unaware of tractor movement etc.
- Always use the right personal protective equipment for a job – for volunteers this is mainly strong gloves, and stout footwear.
- Know where things are BEFORE you need them – who are the trained first aiders,

where is the nearest first aid kit, where is the fire extinguisher – and read the Risk Assessment as this explains all the main hazards and how to guard against them.

- If an accident or near miss happens make sure we learn from it – by helping explain it to others and by helping to ensure it is written in the accident or near miss book (on the wall in warehouse kitchen).

What about safeguarding?

‘Safeguarding’ at the Farm is about making sure that nobody suffers harm, abuse or neglect. It is particularly important that children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm. Poor behaviour towards others and unkind treatment of others are unacceptable, and form part of Safeguarding.

At the Farm we have a ‘Safe Space Promise’ that we prepared with help from our volunteers. We ask that all our volunteers read this and follow it. You can find it at the end of this document (in Appendix 2). We also have a Safeguarding Policy, and a designated Safeguarding Officer. The main thing that volunteers need to know is that if you witness anything that worries you in relation to how one person is treating another then please tell the member of staff who is leading the group as soon as possible. You can read the full policy on [our website](#).

What should I do if unexpectedly I can't come?

If you are down to come to a Saturday Community Farmer Day, or weekday volunteering, and something unexpected means that you cannot attend, then please let us know.

How does the Farm communicate regularly with volunteers?

- We recommend you join the Farm’s volunteering WhatsApp group so that you

receive updates and information regarding volunteering sessions. It's also great for sharing photos, organising lift sharing, plus veg related puns and anecdotes of course! You will receive a link to join this in your Welcome Email after you've completed our Volunteer Registration form, or you can also ask us to add you. We ask that you try to only post about Farm matters and message people directly if you can to prevent the chat from pinging too much.

- You can contact us via email or phone – see addresses and numbers on page 2.
- Every 4 – 6 weeks we send out our Farm newsletter, which contains lots of interesting information about life across the farm (click [here](#) to sign up if you haven't already). We also send regular emails to volunteers (unless you have told us you don't want to receive them) sharing key dates for events and workshops, as well as plans for the upcoming weeks.
- We try and check in informally with every volunteer regularly to make sure you are happy, and to listen to feedback and suggestions. You can also request a one-to-one review meeting if you need to.
- Roughly twice a year we have a gathering/meeting to which all volunteers are invited, where we plan the work ahead, think about how to make the volunteering experience even better, learn about wider aspects of the Farm and celebrate what has been achieved.
- Experienced volunteers who work alongside staff in the warehouse and on the field can also attend the monthly lunchtime staff meetings if they would like to.
- Each autumn the Farm holds its Annual General Meeting, to which all staff, volunteers, and shareholder members of the Farm are invited. We present our accounts, our Annual Report, and explain some aspects of the Farm's work in the preceding year.

What happens if any problems arise?

If something happens that either you as a volunteer, or we as the staff, are unhappy about, then we will try and resolve this through a process of listening and problem-solving. We will follow the principles outlined in the relevant internal policy, for example relating to bullying and harassment, safeguarding, disciplinary and grievance etc. If you have a concern then the best thing to do is to speak to a member of staff about it as soon as possible, and outline clearly the nature of your concern.

How do I find out more about The Community Farm?

When new volunteers come on a Community Farmer Day, or join our weekday volunteer team, we do our best to outline the story of the Farm – why and how it began, how it runs, all the things we do, and so on. If you haven't had a chance to hear this story then do ask the staff. Our website and social media accounts are also great sources of information on the work of the Farm.

Here are some key facts for you;

- The Farm was started by a group of volunteers in 2009, partly from the Transition Towns movement. They wanted to create a place where anyone could come on the land and experience local organic nature-friendly food growing.
- We registered as a non-profit Community Benefit Society in 2010, and following a successful Community Share Offer we became a legal entity in April 2011 owned by 400+ member shareholders. With 8 paid staff at the beginning, we now employ around 30 souls, making up around 15 whole-time-equivalents!
- We rent our 15 acre site from Luke and Marcus Hasell. The land used to be a conventional dairy pasture. Our landlords put in the tracks and built the warehouse, for which we pay annual rent.
- We converted the land to organic, created wide field margins, planted the apple trees, let the hedgerows grow, put up the yurt and roundhouse, created the learning area, built the polytunnels and much more.
- The Farm is a hub for around 40 organic farms that supply us with produce for our organic produce home delivery service, which goes to Chew Valley, Bristol, Bath, and Weston super Mare. Our annual turnover is around £1 million.
- Each year through our Communities and Partnerships programme, we welcome over 1,500 people onto the land. This is made possible through grant funding and donations. Fundraising is a core part of our activity.
- Our wildlife programme has seen an increase over the years in butterflies, bees, nesting owls, dormice, and we have a thriving badger family.

Checklist of what to do now

- Complete the [online Volunteer Registration Form](#)
- Read the Health and Safety headings (Appendix 1)
- Read the Safe Space Promise (Appendix 2 & [online](#))
- Sign up for a [Community Farmer Saturday](#) or [weekday session](#)
- Join our Volunteering WhatsApp group
- Email volunteer@thecommunityfarm.co.uk if you have any questions or simply want to find out more!

We look forward to welcoming you onto the land!

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Risk Assessment Main Headings

If you would like to read our full Risk Assessment, please speak to a member of staff who can show you to a printed copy in the Warehouse kitchen. It sets out all the things that are hazardous at the Farm, and all the ways that we can keep risk to an absolute minimum.

The Risk Assessment is divided into sections, and below we have listed all the sections that potentially could apply to volunteers. We hope this will give you a feel for why it is important to be aware of health and safety good practice;

- Slips/trips
- Manual Labour
- Weather
- Moving vehicles and moving machinery on site
- Hand-held and hand operated tools
- Fires and burns
- Safeguarding
- Irritant plants
- Infectious diseases
- Animals that sting or are poisonous
- Hazardous materials

Appendix 2: Safe Space Promise

The Community Farm is a welcoming and inclusive place for people to spend time together.

We appreciate that everyone is different and has different needs, and we want to celebrate this and act together in ways that make people feel welcome, valued and safe.

Our values include: trust, kindness, openness, integrity, inclusivity and fairness.

Whether you are coming to the Farm as a volunteer, employee or to attend one of our workshops or courses, we ask you to follow these ground-rules:

- Treat everyone equally and with respect, without prejudice to race, physical and mental health, age, ethnic origins, gender, ability, religion, sexuality or cultural background.
- Be accepting of people's different views and value their perspectives, even if they are different from your own – as long as these views are not in conflict with the Farms' values.
- Use language and body language which is non-threatening.
- Remember that people's personal circumstances are not always obvious, and be sensitive to people's different moods.
- Communicate openly with people, ask for advice if you need it and be prepared to discuss and resolve any issues that arise.
- Give everyone the opportunity to have a voice and express their opinion.
- Be honest and truthful in your actions and endeavour to uphold our values at all times.
- Help everyone get involved with activities and adapt ways of working with people to try and meet their particular needs.
- Honour commitments you have made, and fulfil these to the best of your ability.
- Be aware of health and safety risks and don't act in a way that endangers the health or safety of anyone.

If you are concerned about health and safety issues, or your own or someone else's welfare, please tell a member of staff as soon as possible.

We want everyone to behave in ways that reflect our values.