

Final BYF Volunteer Strategy 2019

Central Aim of BYF Volunteering Strategy

To involve the skills, experience and energy of volunteers to help us take yoga to communities without access to yoga and to help organise all our other activities.

Specific Goals

1. Ensure we always have sufficient volunteers from the yoga community to help run our community yoga outreach work projects, our annual Festival & our other yoga community “umbrella” activities (thereby also increasing their sense of “ownership” of BYF).
2. Identify and involve increasing numbers of volunteers in our work from outside the traditional yoga community and from our target communities.
3. Ensure that volunteers’ experience of working with BYF is rewarding & positive.
4. Systematise BYF’s use of volunteering in terms of goals, publicity, recruitment, communication, recognition, safeguarding, support and review.

Why Volunteers ?

Quite simply, we neither have enough money or resources yet to be able to afford to pay part-time or full-time staff: nor do the trustees have enough time to carry out the wide range of functions we have taken on – the Festival, the outreach work and the yoga community support activities. We have therefore become reliant on volunteers but this has been unplanned and haphazard. More positively though, there is every reason to hope that volunteering with the BYF should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience – we do already have some feedback to that effect.

We need to make a clearer distinction between volunteers and those paid to do specific work for us¹. In general, BYF will not pay volunteers for their work. Where we require specific and high level expertise that is not available within the trustees or our volunteers (eg Festival Event Management, PR/Marketing) we may contract for a set period with someone to provide that expertise for us – rates for this work may vary. Also some yoga teachers who volunteer to help our yoga outreach work may end up getting paid yoga teaching work. In such cases, the process for appointing volunteers to paid teaching roles will be fair and transparent – either an interview process or selection from an approved panel. We will need to ensure that we retain appropriate paperwork and conform to data protection requirements.

¹ This will be particularly important if/when we can afford to take on any part-time contract staff

How We Recruit Volunteers

Generally speaking, we will advertise for volunteers – either through social media & our website, or via meetings and events we have organised and personal contacts². We will also try within our community outreach work, to find people from those target groups who may be willing to become volunteers. In all cases, the prospective volunteer will be contacted and their skills/availability clarified prior to their recruitment. Where the work involves any degree of sensitivity (eg involving finances, or working with vulnerable people) the volunteer will be interviewed by a trustee or someone with appropriate experience delegated by them. Where volunteers are likely to be working with vulnerable persons, we will ensure that we get a CRB/see their DBS certificate etc. Such checks can have a financial cost.

Each volunteer will be given a volunteers' agreement to sign. This will specify how much time they have volunteered and their experience/skills and the area(s) of work they have volunteered to help us with. This will also make clear that the role is unpaid, but detailing what expenses may be claimed for while undertaking the work for us and other ways in which their help might be modestly acknowledged (eg giving Festival volunteers free meals). It will also outline our responsibilities to the volunteer explaining clearly their reporting lines and any review process. It will also show how we will keep them safe, how we will communicate with them (including how they can feed back to us on their experience), and how we will support them and recognise their contribution. We will offer to provide basic "references" (ie confirmation of duties/dates etc) for those volunteering with us to future employers and volunteering agencies. We will look into the feasibility of setting up a specific BYF volunteers email or WhatsApp group.

How We Manage Volunteers

We need to recognise clearly that volunteers are a great way to help organise our work. But they are also a responsibility and it takes time to involve volunteers properly and in a way that is mutually beneficial and not exploitative. BYF will nominate a trustee to take the lead on volunteers and develop a register of volunteers with their personal details, availability and skills/expertise³.

² There is a community sector volunteering website we can use and a helpful contact on all volunteering matters at Community Works: sue@bhcommunityworks.org.uk

³ There may be GDPR implications of such a register which we need to clarify