



Autism Angels Volunteer Policy and Procedure

Version:	2.0 July 2026
Review Cycle:	Annually
Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Policy Owner:	Charity Lead
Next Review Date:	July 2027



1. Purpose

Autism Angels recognises that volunteers are an essential part of our community and play a significant role in delivering our charitable mission. This policy sets out the principles, procedures, responsibilities and safeguards relating to volunteering across all Autism Angels activities, including our Alternative Wellbeing and Learning Provision, equine activities, events, fundraising, community projects and administrative support.

The policy aims to:

- Ensure volunteering is safe, supportive and meaningful.
- Promote consistency, fairness and inclusion.
- Comply with safeguarding, recruitment and health and safety legislation.
- Recognise the value of lived experiences.
- Provide clear pathways for young people and service users to become volunteers and, where appropriate, progress into further training, employment or leadership opportunities.

This policy should be read alongside the Autism Angels Volunteer Service Level Agreement (SLA), which forms the practical agreement between Autism Angels and each volunteer.

2. Our Volunteer Ethos

Autism Angels was founded on community, connection and lived experience. Many of our volunteers are neurodivergent, have supported family members, or have previously accessed Autism Angels services themselves.

Our approach to volunteering is therefore **organic and relationship based**. We recognise that traditional recruitment processes can create unnecessary barriers for neurodivergent individuals and those with valuable lived experience. While maintaining rigorous safeguarding and recruitment standards, Autism Angels may adapt the volunteer journey to meet individual needs and circumstances.

We are committed to creating volunteering opportunities that are:

- Inclusive and accessible.
- Skill-based and trauma-informed.
- Flexible where possible.
- Supportive of individual development.
- Focused on belonging and connection.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, including:

- Adult volunteers.
- Young volunteers
- Service users.
- Parent/carer volunteers.
- Event and fundraising volunteers.
- Student or work placement volunteers.
- Specialist volunteers providing professional skills or support.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Charity Commission guidance on volunteers.

5. Volunteer Recruitment

5.1 Organic Recruitment

Recruitment at Autism Angels is often bespoke and relationship led. Volunteers may come through:

- Previous participation in Autism Angels services.
- Family involvement.
- Community relationships.
- Referrals.
- Existing volunteers or staff.
- Local schools, colleges or universities.
- Community and corporate partnerships.

We recognise that many volunteers already have established relationships with the organisation before taking on a volunteer role.



5.2 Young Volunteer Pathway

Autism Angels actively encourages appropriate volunteering opportunities for young people.

A typical pathway may include:

Service User → Trainee Volunteer → Young Volunteer → Trainee → Employment/Team Member

There are opportunities for young volunteers to gradually increase learning and responsibility as they develop confidence, skills and maturity. Duties are always age-appropriate and supervised.

Young volunteers under 18 will not undertake regulated activity without appropriate supervision and safeguards.

Parental/carers consent is required for volunteers under 18.

5.3 Equal Opportunities

Autism Angels welcomes volunteers regardless of disability, neurodivergence, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic background.

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible to support volunteers to participate safely and successfully.

6. Safer Recruitment

All volunteers are recruited in accordance with the Autism Angels Safer Recruitment Policy.

Depending on the role, this may include:

- Taster visit
- Informal or formal discussion.
- References where appropriate.
- Identity verification.
- Right to volunteer checks where required.
- DBS checks including Enhanced DBS check where the role involves regulated activity or regular contact with children or vulnerable individuals.
- Barred List checks where legally required.
- Risk assessment where relevant.

Recruitment processes may vary to meet individual needs while maintaining safeguarding standards.

7. Identity Verification



Before commencing volunteering, Autism Angels will verify the volunteer's identity using appropriate documentation.

Acceptable documents may include:

- Passport.
- Driving licence.
- Birth certificate.
- Utility bill or bank statement confirming address.
- Other documents acceptable for DBS purposes.

Identity verification records will be stored securely in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

8. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Autism Angels is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable individuals.

8.1 Enhanced DBS

An Enhanced DBS check will be obtained where required by law or organisational risk assessment.

8.2 Renewal

DBS checks will be renewed periodically in line with organisational procedures and local authority expectations.

8.3 Positive Disclosures

A criminal record does not automatically prevent volunteering. Decisions will be made individually, considering:

- Nature of the offence.
- Relevance to the role.
- Time elapsed.
- Evidence of rehabilitation.
- Safeguarding risk.

All decisions will be documented appropriately.

9. Volunteer Induction

Every volunteer will receive an induction appropriate to their role before beginning volunteering.

Induction will normally include:

- Introduction to Autism Angels values and ethos.

- Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Child protection procedures.
- Prevent awareness.
- Health and safety procedures.
- Fire and emergency procedures.
- First aid arrangements.
- Site orientation.
- Animal safety procedures.
- Confidentiality requirements.
- Data protection.
- Behaviour expectations.
- Boundaries and professional conduct.
- Reporting concerns.
- Introduction to relevant staff members.

Volunteers will also receive the Volunteer Service Level Agreement (SLA).

10. Training

Autism Angels is committed to developing volunteers through ongoing and regular learning opportunities.

Mandatory Training

Volunteers will complete training appropriate to their role, which may include:

- Safeguarding children.
- Prevent Duty awareness.
- Health and Safety.
- Fire safety.
- First aid awareness.
- Manual handling.
- Equine safety.
- Behaviour support.
- Autism and neurodiversity awareness.
- Trauma-informed practice.

Training may be delivered in person, online or through supported practical learning.

11. Supervision and Support

Volunteers will be supported by a members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Support may include:



- Session check-ins and check-outs.
- Informal supervision.
- Debriefing opportunities.
- Additional mentoring for young volunteers.
- Private Coaching sessions.
- Wellbeing support.
- Opportunities for feedback and development.

Volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns, request adjustments or seek additional support at any time that they need it.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Autism Angels will:

- Provide a safe and supportive volunteering environment.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place.
- Provide induction and relevant training.
- Conduct required recruitment and DBS checks.
- Provide appropriate supervision.
- Maintain appropriate insurance cover.
- Treat volunteers fairly and with respect.
- Make reasonable adjustments where possible.
- Recognise volunteer contributions.

Volunteers will:

- Follow all Autism Angels policies and procedures.
- Attend agreed sessions where possible.
- Participate in required training.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Follow health and safety procedures.
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately.
- Treat all children, families, staff and volunteers with dignity and respect.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for outdoor and animal-based activities.
- Inform Autism Angels of any relevant changes to health, contact details or circumstances.

13. Safeguarding Responsibilities

All volunteers share responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable individuals.

Volunteers must:



- Read and understand relevant safeguarding guidance.
- Immediately report any safeguarding concern, disclosure or allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.
- Never promise confidentiality to a child.
- Record concerns factually and promptly.
- Follow Autism Angels safeguarding procedures at all times.

Volunteers must never undertake unsupervised activities with children unless specifically authorised and appropriately vetted.

14. Confidentiality

Volunteers may become aware of sensitive personal information relating to children, families, staff or other volunteers.

Volunteers must:

- Keep all personal information confidential.
- Not discuss children or families outside Autism Angels.
- Not share information on social media.
- Not retain photographs, documents or personal information.
- Follow the Autism Angels Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies.

Confidentiality continues after volunteering ends.

15. Data Protection

Autism Angels processes volunteer information in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Volunteer information may include:

- Contact details.
- Emergency contacts.
- Medical information.
- DBS information.
- Training records.

Information will be stored securely and only accessed by authorised personnel.

16. Health, Safety and Welfare

Volunteers must comply with all health and safety procedures.

This includes:

- Signing in and out.
- Following risk assessments.



- Wearing appropriate PPE where required.
- Following staff instructions.
- Reporting accidents, incidents or near misses.
- Following animal safety procedures.
- Participating in emergency evacuation procedures.

A trained first aider will be present during operational sessions.

17. Young Volunteers

Additional safeguards apply to volunteers under 18.

These include:

- Parental/carers consent.
- Age-appropriate duties.
- Appropriate supervision.
- No regulated activity unless legally permitted and supervised.
- Additional wellbeing support where required.

Young volunteers are encouraged to develop confidence, independence and employability skills in a safe environment.

18. Expenses

Volunteering is unpaid.

Autism Angels may reimburse agreed reasonable expenses incurred while volunteering, subject to prior approval and submission of receipts, in accordance with organisational procedures.

19. Volunteer Conduct

Volunteers are expected to demonstrate behaviour consistent with Autism Angels values.

Unacceptable behaviour may include:

- Breach of safeguarding procedures.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- Violence or threatening behaviour.
- Substance misuse.
- Unsafe conduct.
- Failure to follow reasonable instructions.
- Conduct that damages the reputation of Autism Angels.



Concerns will be addressed proportionately and may result in additional supervision, training, role adjustment or termination of volunteering.

20. Ending the Volunteer Relationship

Either the volunteer or Autism Angels may end the volunteering arrangement at any time.

Autism Angels may end volunteering immediately where necessary to protect children, families, staff, volunteers or the organisation.

Examples include:

- Safeguarding concerns.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Failure to follow safety procedures.
- Misalignment with Autism Angels values and approaches.
- Inability to safely fulfil the volunteer role.

Where appropriate, an exit conversation will be offered.

21. Recognition and Development

Autism Angels values the contribution of volunteers and seeks to recognise their impact through:

- References where appropriate.
- Certificates.
- Celebration events.
- Training opportunities.
- Increased responsibility.
- Leadership opportunities.
- Pathways into employment or further education where suitable.

22. Linked Documents

This policy should be read alongside:

- Volunteer Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- Safer Recruitment Policy.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Code of Conduct.
- Essence Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Complaints Policy.



23. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, following significant legislative changes, safeguarding updates, or organisational developments.

Approved by: *Sarah Keko*

Position: Founder

Date: 29/07/2026