Thread Ahead Volunteer Policy

Date last reviewed: 8th May 2026

Review next due: 8th May 2028

Thread Ahead is a charity with a dual purpose: to provide refugees with choice and dignity in how they dress and to increase circularity in the fashion industry. We run events where excess stock is donated directly to refugees and asylum seekers, saving it from landfill or incineration.

1. Our vision for volunteering 2

2. Our commitment to volunteering 2

3. What is volunteering? 2

4. Recruitment 2

5. Welcome, learning and development 3

6. Support 3

7. Volunteer expenses 4

8. Our values 4

9. Complaints 5

10. Health and safety and insurance 5

11. Safeguarding and whistleblowing 6

12. Gifts and hospitality 6

13. Equal opportunities and diversity 7

14. Confidentiality and data protection 7

15. Recognising and valuing volunteers 8

16. Moving on from a volunteer role 8

17. Communications 9

18. Other useful documents/policies 9

19. Review 10

1. Our vision for volunteering

Thread Ahead recognises that as a volunteer you make vital contributions towards our work reducing waste in the fashion industry and providing dignified services to people with insecure immigration status. We are committed to inspiring, developing and supporting you and recognise that the support you provide is essential to our work.

2. Our commitment to volunteering

People attending our events benefit from the contribution of our volunteers, who provide invaluable support, skills, experience and ideas. We want every volunteer to have a positive experience and will strive to continually improve your experience with Thread Ahead. To achieve this, we'll work together with volunteers to meet best practice in volunteer management standards, offer worthwhile volunteering that meets the motivations of volunteers, and involve volunteers at every appropriate opportunity.

3. What is volunteering?

Thread Ahead volunteers support and enable the organisation to achieve its vision – increased circularity in the fashion industry and the provision of dignity and choice to people with insecure immigration status. We define volunteering as a formal relationship between the organisation and an individual who gives their time and skills unpaid to undertake a clearly identified role as part of the delivery of Thread Ahead's work. All volunteer roles at Thread Ahead will have a defined role description.

4. Recruitment

Thread Ahead is committed to offering volunteering opportunities that appeal to a range of people and to ensuring that our volunteer recruitment procedures are consistent, fair and transparent. We are also particularly interested in making volunteering as accessible as possible to people with lived experience of the UK asylum system or insecure immigration status.

We want to make it as easy as possible for volunteers to join us whilst ensuring we have safe and robust procedures in place. Therefore, when applying for a role, you'll be asked to complete an application process appropriate to that specific role. Our processes are designed to ensure you have the opportunity to learn about the role and make sure it's right for you, as well as ensuring we match you with the right role.

There is no upper age limit for volunteers. However, some of our volunteer roles have a minimum age restriction of 18 to ensure that younger volunteers are not put at risk. Any age restrictions are clearly marked on our volunteer role descriptions.

5. Welcome, learning and development

We want to ensure that all volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to undertake their roles safely and effectively and get the most out of them. As a Thread Ahead volunteer, you'll be provided with a welcome to the charity and ongoing learning and development opportunities appropriate to your role, such as shadowing others and attending group events. For some roles, there's compulsory training, which may be refreshed from time to time. Where training is compulsory for a role, and a volunteer decides not to complete this, we would ask that they step down and would discuss alternative roles with them. Any training requirements will be outlined in volunteer role descriptions.

6. Support

We believe that all volunteers should be supported throughout their time with us and we are committed to ensuring appropriate volunteer support is in place across the charity.

We recognise that volunteers give their time in different ways and have different support needs, which is why we provide a flexible model of volunteer support which is tailored to you and your role. You will be matched with a staff contact who will offer you support and guidance. Staff contacts provide you with the opportunity to discuss your role, successes, progress and learning and development needs, as well as any issues or concerns you may have. Training may be available and should be discussed with your staff contact, if of interest.

7. Volunteer expenses

Volunteers should not be disadvantaged in any way whilst volunteering for Thread Ahead, including financially. We will reimburse all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst carrying out volunteering activities, in line with Thread Ahead's Volunteer Expenses Policy. Volunteers should familiarise themselves with this policy prior to starting the role.

The Volunteer Expenses Policy, which includes details on how to submit a claim, can be found here.

8. Our values

We ask that all our staff and volunteers understand and operate in line with Thread Ahead's core values:

Sustainability: The fashion industry is the world's second biggest polluter. It particularly harms communities who are more likely to experience displacement. We redirect brand new clothes, toiletries and accessories away from incineration or landfill, offering them to people with insecure immigration instead.

Dignity: Dignity means running services which are community-led and provide outcomes beyond the relief of immediate needs alone. We relieve urgent, practical needs while offering dignified, empowering experiences to all visitors. We want everyone to leave our spaces with items they really love.

Accessibility: The UK border regime enacts violence in many different ways. Our spaces are open to all people with insecure immigration status. We want every visitor to feel safe and welcome, regardless of legal status, country of origin, age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or disability.

When volunteering with us, we ask that you:

- Strive for the best that you can do and complete your volunteering activities with dedication and commitment.
- Have a basic understanding of the potential trauma faced by people with insecure immigration status and how this may continue to affect their lives.
- Go to any briefings and training that we think will help you in your role.

- Maintain the confidentiality of our visitors, team and procedures. Refer to our Social Media Policy, which all volunteers must adhere to, for guidance around posting on your personal social media.

- Value and respect the feelings and views of visitors. This includes listening and taking them seriously if they express views, including about the clothes they like or don't like, and not expecting them to express gratitude for our services. We are all about providing a dignified experience, similar to what you'd expect as a paying customer in a high-end shop.

- Let your staff contact know if you are unsure about what you're doing, if you have any problems, or if you have any complaints, concerns or feedback.

- Meet agreed time commitments and give reasonable notice when you're not available so that arrangements can be made.

9. Complaints

We are committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled promptly and fairly. To this end, we have a Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy, which covers complaints about the organisation and its staff. All complaints are treated confidentially and will be dealt with openly, fairly and promptly to minimise any disruption to volunteers, staff and service users.

We will always try to resolve complaints informally before moving to a formal resolution process. We encourage volunteers to start by speaking to their staff contact, another member of staff, or a member of the Board of Trustees if they feel unhappy with their volunteering experience.

Please refer to our Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy here.

10. Health and safety and insurance

Thread Ahead is committed to ensuring that you volunteer in a safe environment and are not exposed to unnecessary risks. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for health and safety but we all have a responsibility to ensure we act safely and do not expose ourselves or others to any unnecessary risks.

You will be provided with appropriate health and safety information and/or training before starting your role, which will include any risks identified as specific to your role.

As a Thread Ahead volunteer, you are covered under our insurance arrangements, which include public liability, personal injury and loss or damage to personal property while involved in the activities of Thread Ahead. This is subject to policy limits, terms, conditions and exceptions, including car insurance. However, you have a responsibility not to expose yourself and others to any unnecessary risks while volunteering. If in doubt or for further information, please speak to your staff contact.

11. Safeguarding and whistleblowing

At Thread Ahead, we have processes and procedures in place to ensure we can volunteer, work and receive support in a safe way. We take our responsibilities for the safety and security of our people very seriously and have a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy in place. Safeguarding underpins our approach to all our work and to the wellbeing of staff, volunteers and visitors more widely. Irrespective of role, everyone at Thread Ahead is expected to take an active role in maintaining our safeguarding practices.

We will support you to understand, observe and report any safeguarding concerns you may have connected to your work at Thread Ahead. We ask you to ensure that you are familiar with our Safeguarding Policy and know who to contact if you have a concern.

Thread Ahead's Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy can be found here.

12. Gifts and hospitality

You may be offered gifts, hospitality or some other benefit by those outside the charity when volunteering for Thread Ahead. There may also be times where you believe it is appropriate to offer a gift or hospitality to someone outside the charity. We have a comprehensive Gifts & Hospitality Policy in place which outlines how to deal with the receipt or offers of gifts or hospitality in an appropriate manner. Volunteers must read this if they are offered a gift or hospitality as a result of their relationship with Thread Ahead. Volunteers must not make offers of gifts or

hospitality during their work with Thread Ahead without the explicit approval of their line manager.

The Gifts & Hospitality Policy can be found here.

13. Equal opportunities and diversity

We want Thread Ahead to be actively anti-oppression, and inclusive for all, in everything we do. We know that change is the result of action, not intention, and, to this end, we are regularly review, reflect and adapt all aspects of our work, both in terms of external support and internal operations.

We are striving towards equity and being anti-racist. This means changing our mindsets, processes, behaviours and culture to simultaneously focus on tackling both the root causes and the symptoms. Inclusion and equity must be core to how Thread Ahead operates, embedded through training and ongoing reflective conversations, and never treated as an afterthought. This impetus for change is a prerequisite for all staff, both in terms of service design and delivery. Everyone representing Thread Ahead must be dedicated to understanding, learning, and applying the necessary behaviours to create an inclusive organisation, including our volunteers.

Our goal is to ensure our working environment is equitable and safe for everyone who works with and for us.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy can be found here.

14. Confidentiality and data protection

Everyone involved with Thread Ahead has a right to confidentiality and we are committed to integrating the principles of confidentiality throughout the organisation. You may have access to information of a confidential nature as part of your role. Confidential information is held on trust and should not be discussed outside Thread Ahead or in general conversation, and must not be used by anyone for their own purposes.

Personal and sensitive information about our people should always be treated in the strictest of confidence and in line with data protection legislation, as detailed in our

Privacy Policy. As a volunteer you will be provided with the relevant data protection information and/or training relevant to your role which must be completed.

Our Privacy Policy can be found here.

15. Recognising and valuing volunteers

We could not deliver the work of Thread Ahead without volunteers and are committed to ensuring that your contributions are recognised and valued appropriately across the organisation.

We understand that many of our volunteers may themselves have lived experience of the UK immigration system. Many may also have initially interacted with Thread Ahead as beneficiaries of our services, already knowing our teams well before becoming volunteers. With this range of background and experience in mind, Thread Ahead is committed to ensuring that the contributions of all volunteers are recognised in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

We recognise that work in our sector can be exhausting at times, as government policy makes conditions for people with insecure immigration status increasingly challenging and hostile. We also recognise that volunteering with us may take a particular emotional toll for those with lived experience of the UK asylum system or precarious immigration status. As outlined below, we have provision in place for wellbeing breaks from volunteering wherever necessary.

16. Moving on from a volunteer role

We hope that you will enjoy your volunteering experience with us, but we recognise that you may wish to leave your role for a wide variety of reasons. Equally, there may also be times when Thread Ahead will need to end a volunteer role because of changes in circumstance, funding or organisational focus.

We ask that, where possible, you let your staff contact know when you would like to leave in advance, so we can put any necessary measures in place to continue the activity or support delivered through your role. We greatly value the opportunity to learn from our volunteers so we can continue to improve the volunteer experience and will invite you to provide your feedback on your experience before you move on.

We also recognise that in certain circumstances, volunteers may need to take a break from volunteering, and we will support you to do so. Please let your staff contact know if you would like to take a break.

If Thread Ahead needs to end a volunteer role then you will be given as much notice as possible. You will have the opportunity to provide your feedback and discuss any alternative volunteer roles available that you may wish to apply for.

17. Communications

All of Thread Ahead's communications with you will aim to encourage a culture of open dialogue and sharing of information and ideas between volunteers, staff and people affected by our work.

Your staff contact will keep you up-to-date with any information relevant to your role and important organisational developments and issues will be communicated through a range of tools, including publications, events, email updates and our website.

We are committed to ensuring that you have the opportunity to contribute your ideas and suggestions and to ensuring that you receive feedback on those you share with us.

18. Other useful documents/policies

In addition to this Volunteer Policy, it is compulsory for all volunteers to read the following documents prior to starting their role:

- Role description
- Safeguarding Policy
- Volunteer Expenses Policy
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

While it is not compulsory, all volunteers will also be provided with the following policies, which they may choose to read prior to starting their role and which they may refer back to throughout their time as a volunteer with Thread Ahead:

- Privacy Policy
- Media Policy
- Gifts & Hospitality Policy

- Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy

All volunteers are expected to act in line with all of the above policies while volunteering with Thread Ahead. All of the above policies can be found here.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years. It may be reviewed earlier if relevant changes to legislation or Charity Commission guidelines take place.