



Volunteer Handbook

2012-2013

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Introduction

Volunteers are seen as one of the most essential, unique and invaluable components of The Nishkam Centre. They assist with coordinating projects & events, delivering training & education and offering guidance & support for the local and global community.

Background information on the Organisation

GNNSJ - **Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha** was founded in the late 1950's. It is a registered, religious charitable organisation dedicated to selfless service, and to enhancing the understanding and practical application of the Sikh faith.

GNNSJ's overall vision encompasses on five Centres' of Excellence – all imbued with a faith 'dimension', where the principles of self-help, self-reliance and community participation are practiced and encouraged, and serve as a model for other organisations to emulate. The five Centres' are:

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) | -The Gurudwara & Spiritual Hub |
| Nishkam Civic Association (NCA) | -Community and Civic Centre |
| Marg Sat Santokh Manufacturers Ltd. (MSS) | -Timber & builders merchants |
| Nishkam Education Trust (NET) | -Academic initiatives |
| Community Care & Social Housing | -intergenerational & Elderly care |

The NCA is a non-political, charitable organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Birmingham's diverse communities. It has established a centre for excellence – **'The Nishkam Centre'** in Handsworth, one of the most socially deprived regions in the UK. The Nishkam Centre is guided by the main tenets of Sikh teaching, which promote equality, spirituality, social inclusion, selfless service and integrity.

Nishkam Centre Overview

The Nishkam Centre is a relatively new and unique organisation charged with the task of developing a dynamic faith-based civic agenda.

In recent times, the Government has recognised the importance that Faith plays in the maintenance, regeneration and development of our communities. Faith groups are now an integral part of the Government's agenda for promoting community and economic wellbeing, social justice and community cohesion.

The new £6m+ Nishkam Centre was built with more than £1.5m worth of Nishkam Sewa (Selfless Service), and it is this active volunteering, that is the life blood of the work that is emerging here. Our volunteers work with passion, selflessness and commitment. It is their tireless effort and devotion that helps us to move mountains and plough new furrows.

In the 1860's this City gave birth to a dynamic Civic Gospel, today we are witnessing a new civic spirit taking shape at the grass roots calling for renewed civic responsibility and action from our leaders and institutions. Spirituality and secularity are two sides of the same coin; faith in action, and for the Nishkam Centre, an opportunity to integrate core Sikh values into civic action.

The Nishkam Centre will be at the forefront of advancing community and economic wellbeing; promoting interfaith, intercultural, intercommunity dialogue and championing social justice and inclusion.

Our Mission:

The Nishkam Centre is a Sikh faith-led organisation working for the benefit of all communities. Our mission is to practice and promote the universal values of earning an honest living, sharing and active volunteering.

By applying these values in all our work, we aspire to develop and empower individuals so that they help themselves and others in building strong families and sustainable communities.

Our vision:

By 2015, we will be renowned regionally, nationally and internationally as an exemplar Sikh faith-led institution that is sustained by the selfless service of the community to become a powerful force for vocational learning, enterprise, civic engagement, art, culture, heritage and wellbeing.

Building Layout

The Nishkam Centre has four floors:

SECOND FLOOR

Enabling civil engagement and community renewal

Promoting innovation and change for sustainable community development

Interfaith, global ethics and globalization for the common good

FIRST FLOOR

Policy and performance management

Community learning

Community development

Advice and Support Service

GROUND FLOOR

Anglo-Sikh heritage centre

Business enterprise

Community learning

Active volunteering

ICT support hub

BASEMENT

Centre for Wellbeing

Holistic Living

Staffing Structure

The Board:

The Board is made up of qualified professionals who, on a voluntary basis, bring a range of expertise and skills to the running of the organisation:

Chairman Bhai Sahib Bhai (Dr) Mohinder Singh
Community Leader
Civil/ Structural Engineer

Vice Chairman Professor Upkar Singh Pardesi

Board Members

1. Herpreet Kaur Kundi (Company Secretary and Non-Executive Director)
2. Balvir Kaur Dhillon - (Non-Executive Director)
3. Sewa Singh Mandla – (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)
4. Ranjit Singh Dhanda – (Non-Executive Director)
5. Jarnail Singh Bhinder – (Non-Executive Director)
6. Perminder Singh Jhutti – (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)
7. Gopinder Kaur Sagoo – GKS (Non-Executive Director)
8. Shaminder Singh Rai (Non-Executive Director)
9. Upkar Singh Jheeta (Non-Executive Director)

Nishkam Centre staff:

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Centre Director | Amrick Singh Ubhi |
| Operations Manager | Ajit Singh |
| Reception | Manjit Kaur Bhurjee & Baldeep Dhillon |
| Finance Manager | Daljit Singh Authi |
| Conference & Events Manager | Rajiv Lakhanpal |
| Wellbeing Manager | Inderpal Singh Ubhi |
| Information Advice & Guidance | Amarjit Singh Sagoo |
| Chaplaincy Coordinator | Narinder Kaur Sidhu |
| Project Coordinators | Kiranjot Kaur Jheeta |
| Learndirect Manager | Shuminder Kaur Mann |
| Learndirect Administrator | Gurjit Kaur |
| Learndirect Tutor | Neha Chaudhary |
| Alternative Therapist | Dara Singh |

Volunteers

There are currently over 150 volunteers actively engaged in volunteering on campus. There are many more volunteers working on overseas projects.

The Role of a Volunteer

Our Volunteer Charter

The purpose of adopting this charter is to encourage best practice in volunteer management, seeking always to develop the quality of volunteering opportunities. This charter seeks to provide overall guidance and direction to employees and Volunteers, and to demonstrate that The Nishkam Centre recognizes its obligations to its Volunteers.

The Nishkam Centre commits to the following:

- Our volunteers are a key group of individuals within the organisation who are represented at all levels of decision making.
- To ensure that all volunteers are properly integrated into the organizational structure and that staff at all levels work with volunteers and involve them in the work of the organisation.
- To consult with volunteers about their tasks, keep them informed of changes, make clear what is expected and to provide them with regular feedback.
- To assist volunteers in doing their work effectively by providing induction, training, information, supervision and support appropriate to the tasks, via regular mentor meetings.
- To respect volunteer skills, dignity, individual wishes and recognize volunteer contributions.
- To provide adequate insurance cover for volunteer whilst undertaking duties approved and authorised by The Nishkam Management Team, and be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and public liability as paid employees.
- To implement policies and procedures to ensure compliance with equal opportunities, health and safety and to support best practice in doing sewa.
- To endeavor to resolve any problems, grievances and difficulties which may be encountered and provide an opportunity to discuss the issues in an appropriate manner.

Getting Started

Application form

Once the application form has been completed, references may be requested. Your volunteer mentor will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the start of your volunteering journey.

Your mentor

Your mentor will be in charge of your training and volunteering needs and will insure that our requirements and your expectations are met. Your mentor will be responsible for ensuring that your role as a volunteer within the Nishkam Centre is a rewarding and challenging one.

Volunteer Positions

Volunteer opportunities/vacancies at the Nishkam Centre include:

- Administration
- Media
- Wellbeing
- General

If you would like to volunteer in the capacity of a specific skill or ability not listed above, please do not hesitate to contact the Centre. Contact details are listed at the end of this Handbook.

Induction

You will receive an induction when you become a volunteer at The Nishkam Centre. Your mentor will be responsible for ensuring the induction is completed. It will include the following:

- An introduction to The Nishkam Centre's aims, activities, and operating structures;
- Induction on the Nishkam Centre's policies, specifically:
 - Volunteering policy
 - Sikh values policy - no smoking, no meat & no alcohol
 - Equal opportunities & Diversity
 - Privacy & Confidentiality
 - Health & Safety
 - Security & Data Protection
 - Complaints procedure
- A discussion on your role, expectations and the terms of the volunteering assignment
- Your key responsibilities, tasks and the working procedures that you will be involved in.

Volunteer Agreement

A record will be kept of the arrangements for your volunteer activities via an agreement. The agreement is flexible to take account of individual needs and is not a contract of employment. We do however require that you sign the agreement as an indication of your acceptance of the policies and procedures that you are subject to at The Nishkam Centre.

Volunteer Time Sheets

All volunteer must fill in a timesheet on a weekly basis. This record is required for administrative and funding purposes. The sheets will record how many hours you spend volunteering and what tasks are undertaken. This data is strictly confidential and we respect all Volunteer's humility if they wish not to disclose it.

Trial period

All volunteers will be subject to a 4 week trial period with weekly volunteer and mentor meetings. On completion of this trial period a review meeting will be set up where you and your mentor will get the chance to openly discuss what you enjoyed doing and where extra training or support may be required.

Volunteer / Mentor Meetings

Volunteers are required to meet with their mentors to review work in progress, catch up on recent events and plan for future tasks/projects. These meetings will also provide the chance to discuss problems and issues, and the support and training options available to suit you. You may also be required to attend team meetings with other staff and volunteers.

Complaints & suggestions

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback. if a volunteer wishes to complain then the complaints procedure should be followed. This procedure can be found on the shared drive. There is a suggestion box at reception. Volunteers can complete the suggestion slip and drop this in to the box. Suggestions and complaints are dealt with promptly by the operations manager and the centre director.

Access to Resources & Equipment

Your Mentor will organise access to any resources and equipment if it is required by the task you will be doing. Computer logins, pass-codes for accessing printers and photocopiers are available and will be outlined to you in your induction, should your role require the use of any of these facilities.

Policies and Procedures

A copy of all our policies and procedures are available from your mentor. They are available to all staff, volunteers and users of the Nishkam Centre and are stored within the Admin office and also at reception.

Sikh principles of volunteering

Within the Sikh faith, active Volunteering is referred to as Nishkam Sewa.

Sewa is a word used to refer to the practice of service to others done selflessly – with *Nishkamta* – without any thought of reward or personal benefit. The person performing this service is called a *Volunteer*. Simply the ‘spirit of seeing God in all’ is encouragement and satisfaction enough to keep going.

“Active volunteering is a combination of **nishkam sewa** (selfless service without the prospect of reward), **dasvand** (donating a minimum of 10% of one’s income or ‘in-kind’), and a heart felt conviction that **work is worship** (where work and community service is itself rewarding).”

Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh

Sewa is very closely linked to Simran. Simran refers to the constant remembrance of the Divine Lord. This should be practiced consciously until it becomes a natural and spontaneous state of mind.

Sewa and Simran are the foundations Sikhi. It is the duty of every Sikh to practice Simran daily and engage in Sewa whenever there is an opportunity. Both these functions need to be performed in equal amounts. In oral tradition, Sikhs talk about *simran* and *sewa* being the two wings of the bird – both must be kept in balance. You can not have love for the Creator (*simran*) without showing love towards his Creation (*sewa*). Simran inspires wisdom, Sewa – humility.

In a Sikh’s life, sewa and simran are steered by Kirtan – listening and contemplating on the melodious voice of the Guru’s teachings, like a navigation system for the heart and mind.

When practiced daily, the above aspects of Sikhi come together to form the daily Nitnem. In order to be a good volunteer the routine of the daily Nitnem must be adhered to.

Contact Details

For further information please contact:

The Nishkam Centre
6 Soho Road, Handsworth,
Birmingham. B21 9BH

Tel: 0121 515 4229

Fax: 0121 515 0009

The Nishkam Centre opening hours:

Mon – Fri 9am to 9pm

Sat 10.30am to 9pm