



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for voluntary groups*



# **Volunteer Handbook**

# **2019**

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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:

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
Nishkam Healthcare Trust (NHCT)	-Medical and social care

The NCA is a non-political, charitable organisation 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 unique organisation charged with the task of developing a dynamic faith-based civic agenda.

In recent times, the Government and Local 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 is 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 & Values**

The actions we take are driven by our Vision:

We are a renowned regional, national, and international exemplar Sikh –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 and heritage, and our values:

- Inspiration through spirituality
- Integrity
- Innovative approaches to social change
- Intercultural, interfaith and intra-faith dialogue, understanding and cooperation
- Interdependency of all in local and global context

## **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

The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The Museum of World Religions (UK)

### **FIRST FLOOR**

Policy and performance management

Community learning & Development

Community development

IAG Advice and advocacy services

Entrepreneurship

Conference and Events facilities

### **GROUND FLOOR**

Heritage centre

IAG Advice and advocacy services

Community learning

Active volunteering

ICT support hub

Welfare events (Places of Welcome)

### **BASEMENT**

Centre for Wellbeing

Holistic Living

Health Promotion

## 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 )
2. Gurinder Singh Mandla – (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)
3. Jarnail Singh Bhinder – (Non-Executive Director)
4. Perminder Singh Jhutti – (Trustee)
5. Gopinder Kaur Sagoo – (Non-Executive Director)
6. Shaminder Singh Rai (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)
7. Upkar Singh Jheeta (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)
8. Hernam Kaur Nazran (Trustee and Non-Executive Director)

### Nishkam Centre staff:

Centre Director	Amrick Singh Ubhi
Contracts Manager	Ajit singh Ubhi
Reception	Kanchan Kaur & Mark Meghoo
Finance Manager	Daljit Singh Authi
Conference & Events Lead	Narinder Kaur
Wellbeing Lead	Manjeet Kaur
Learning & Development Lead	Ajit Singh Ubhi
Learning & Development Admin & Volunteer Coordinator	Manjit kaur Bhurjee
Chaplaincy Coordinator	Narinder Kaur Sidhu
ASEP IAG Project Lead	Zainab Bibi
ASEP IAG Caseworker	Nosheen Wajid
ASEP IAG Self Help Caseworker	Manpreet Kaur Bahra
Marketing Apprentice	Gurcharan Singh Sandhu
Centre Support Team	Harpal Singh, Kuldip Kaur, Ranjit kaur

## 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 we will undertake a shortlisting process to assess suitable applications.

### Interview

Suitable candidates will be invited for an informal interview conducted using a structured scorecard to ensure transparency and consistency in the recruitment process.

### References

If you are successful at the interview stage then references will be requested. Once satisfactory references have been received the volunteer co-ordinator will arrange a start date and induction.

### Induction

You will receive an induction when you become a volunteer at The Nishkam Centre. The volunteer Co-ordinator 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
- You're key responsibilities, tasks and the working procedures that you will be involved in.

### Your mentor

Your mentor will be in charge of your training and volunteering needs and will ensure 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:

- Nishkam centre Support (Reception, Admin, Media, Befriending)
- Wellbeing
- Maintenance
- Conference & Events

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.

## **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 volunteers must record their hours of volunteering on a timesheet kept at reception. This record is required for administrative, data 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 4-6 week trial period with regular 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 Contracts 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 heartfelt conviction that **work is worship** (where work and community service is itself rewarding).”

NCA Chairman: *Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh OBE KSG*

## Universal benefits of volunteering

Volunteering is an altruistic activity, that is an activity which involves giving without an expectation of reward, and it is true to say that for many people this notion of giving is a major motivation for volunteering.

Volunteering can additionally bring its own rewards to the volunteer themselves and can even be life changing. The benefits of volunteering on the individual are far-reaching and can have a dramatic impact on their overall wellbeing, as well as their relationships with others and career prospects helping them economically.

Studies have shown that volunteering helps people who gift their time feel more socially connected, thus warding off depression and loneliness. Volunteering has positive implications that go beyond mental health. Statistics suggest that people who give their time to others are also rewarded with better physical health.

Volunteering is an act of kindness and by helping others you end up helping yourself.

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

Email: [volunteering@ncauk.org](mailto:volunteering@ncauk.org)

The Nishkam Centre opening hours:

Mon – Fri 9am to 9pm

Sat 10.30am to 9pm