



Volunteer Handbook

Swindon Heritage Preservation: Volunteer Handbook

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Swindon Heritage Preservation - Preserving what matters to our community

Mechanics' Institution Trust (The New Mechanics' Institution Preservation Trust Ltd). Registered Charity Number 1048961.
Company Limited by Guarantee Number: 3059960.

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Overview

Welcome

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Mechanics' Institution Trust (The New Mechanics' Institution Preservation Trust Ltd). Registered Charity Number 1048961.
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Welcome to **Swindon Heritage Preservation** (formerly the Mechanics' Institution Trust). We are Swindon's only building preservation Trust that combines community usage with building restoration, conservation and history. We seek to maximise our social impact through the use of our buildings.

We are delighted that you want to be a part of our journey to restore Swindon's historic buildings, and help us carry out all of the projects, activities and events along the way.

This document will be your handy guide to getting started with us, and it will hopefully be able to answer any questions that you might have. Don't worry if you have any further questions, ideas or queries; you can reach out anytime to our **Volunteer coordinator** by emailing: volunteer@mechanics-trust.org.uk. You can also find other useful contacts, as well as a Glossary at the back of this document.

What is volunteering?

Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial or social gain to "benefit another person, group or organisation". Volunteering is also renowned for skill development and is often intended to promote wellbeing or to improve human quality of life. Volunteering may have positive benefits for the volunteer as well as for the organisation or community served. It is also intended to make contacts for possible employment.

As an organisation, we rely heavily on volunteers to carry out all of the important work we are doing. We value your support and are always seeking ways to create enjoyable and engaging experiences for you to participate in.

As a public-facing organisation, we are committed to building a volunteer network that is representative of Swindon's diversity and multiculturalism and invite individuals from all backgrounds to support us in our work.

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Introduction

Who are we?

Swindon Heritage Preservation (SHP) is Swindon's **only Building Preservation Trust** that combines community usage with building restoration, conservation, and history. We seek to maximise our social impact through the use of our buildings. You can hire our facilities, visit our Railway Village Museum and get involved in our community and heritage events, activities and projects which take place all year round.

How are we funded?

SHP is a charity which relies heavily on grants and donations to carry out all of our work. We lease our heritage buildings and have developed a "not-for-profit" business model to raise funds of our own. Although we work in partnership with other organisations, and have received funds in the form of grants, we do not receive regular funding from Swindon Borough Council or any other body.

Most of our work is dependent on fundraising activities, income generation, charitable donations and grant applications (e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England). These are then re-invested in community activities and heritage projects that will preserve local heritage and benefit local residents and the wider community of Swindon.

Meet the Team

The Board of Trustees is made up of the following people:

Cassie Newland, Co-opted Chair

Bob Wright, Vice Chair

Sally Cole, Treasurer

Helen George, Trustee

Bob Barrett, Trustee

Abbie Rockett, Trustee

Dr. Michael Smith, Trustee

Aaron Marchant, Trustee

Hannah Dosanjh, Co-opted Trustee

Angela Atkinson, Co-opted Trustee

Alan Wrixon, Co-opted Trustee

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Staff:

Andy, Buildings Manager

Malcolm, Booking Coordinator

Abbie, Booking Officer

Dan, Community Engagement (your Volunteer Coordinator)

We also have a range of teams which are made up largely by dedicated volunteers:

- **Railway Village Museum and Tours Team**
- **Digital Team**
- **Emlyn Events Team**
- **Central Community Gardening Team**
- **Archive Team**

We are regularly recruiting new volunteers to each of these groups, so if you would like to join any one of the above teams, please contact your Volunteer coordinator.

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Locations

SHP looks after a number of heritage buildings within Swindon's Railway Village, and hosts various events, projects and activities across a number of locations. Here is a guide to help you learn your way around:

Emlyn Square

Emlyn Square is located right in the heart of Swindon's Railway Village, both geographically and in terms of our activities and presence. Surrounding the Mechanics' Institute, the area hosts a variety of community activities and events all year round that are not dissimilar to those that historically took place in the Mechanics' Institute itself.

Our aim is to raise the profile of, increase the activity in, and highlight the significance of this important heritage destination in Swindon. We are one of the primary stakeholders within Swindon's Railway Village and work closely with other WORKS stakeholders to regenerate this important Heritage Area.

Railway Village Museum

Built as part of Swindon's Railway Village in the 1840s, the Railway Village Museum was originally the home of the Railway Works' foreman. In 1966, Swindon Borough Council began renovating many of the properties in Swindon Railway Village, having bought them from British Railways. Given the importance of the railway industry in Swindon's development, it was decided to turn one of the cottages into a 'Living Museum', and so in March 1980, **34 Faringdon Road** welcomed its first visitors. In 2000 the Museum closed, but following renovation it reopened in 2017 and is now managed by SHP and our dedicated team of volunteers.

Cricketers

Built in 1846, the Cricketers' Arms originally operated as a pub and flats from 1859 until its closure in 2015. In 2019, SHP signed a 125-year lease on the Cricketers' Arms from the Council. Unfortunately, by this point, the building had deteriorated into a state of disrepair. We have now commenced a major project to repair and restore the building to make it fit for community use. We have aspirations to use this building for education, engagement and visitor information.

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Central Community Allotment

Located just a 15 minute walk from the Central Community Centre in Emlyn Square, Westcott Allotments are home to our Community Allotment where we grow food for the benefit of our community. We often donate the food we grow, or we sell it at our events at very low prices to raise funds to continue or expand our projects. The gardening team looks after our Allotment, with help from partner organisations such as Live Well at Swindon Borough Council.

Central Community Spaces

SHP manages two community facilities in Emlyn Square:

Central Community Centre

The Central Community Centre is located in Emlyn Square and is operated by SHP following its transfer from Swindon Borough Council in February 2014. It was originally built in 1862 as an Armoury to serve the XI Wiltshire Volunteer Rifle Corps, before being converted into the GWR Medical Fund Hospital in 1871. It is currently a Grade II listed building that hosts a variety of community groups, activities and events.

Bakers

The Bakers' Community Café is a Community space at the heart of Swindon's historic Railway Village in Emlyn Square. Formerly a Bakery, and then converted to the Bakers Arms Pub, the building was restored by SHP and now operates as a cosy community space that is available to hire.

GWR Park

Located on Faringdon Road within Swindon's Railway Village, GWR Park was created in the 1840s as a public space for workers and their families. Formal landscaping took place in the 1870s and a popular children's fete ran annually between 1866 and 1939. The Park once consisted of formal, ornamental gardens, a cricket pavilion, a bandstand, drinking fountain, lodge, and glasshouse, all of which had disappeared by the 1950s.

SHP is working in partnership with South Swindon Parish Council, Historic England, the National Trust and Swindon Borough Council, through the provisions of the

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Heritage Action Zone to regenerate GWR Park. We support the Park being used for community events and activities, including SHP-led events.

Swindon Mechanics' Institute

The Mechanics' Institution sits in the centre of the Railway Village and was built as a social, educational, and community centre, opened in 1855, expanded in 1892, and refurbished in 1930 following fire damage. With the closure of the Railway Works, the Mechanics' Institute closed in 1986 and has sat derelict since then.

SHP is working in partnership with Swindon Borough Council to find a solution to the ownership, rescue, and rehabilitation of the derelict Mechanics' Institute building, which has been allowed to severely deteriorate over the past few decades. As one of Swindon's most prestigious and significant heritage assets, the rescue of the Mechanics' is the primary objective of the Trust.

Volunteer Roles

Our Volunteer Roles can be distinguished by two types: **Assigned** and **Flexible** Volunteers.

Flexible Volunteers

What is a Flexible Volunteer?

We know that life lends itself to a number of commitments, and so we want to do our best to make your volunteering experience with us as flexible as possible. We aim to ensure that the time you dedicate works around your lifestyle and that you are able to get the most out of your time volunteering with us.

With our flexible volunteer role, there is never any obligation to participate in events, projects and activities. You can sign up to volunteer with us and you will be notified each time there is an opportunity for you to get involved in accordance with your interests and preferences. This way, you can decide if you would like to participate and sign up through your volunteer coordinator.

We try to host regular activities to offer our flexible volunteers, and we have a number of weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings and activities taking place.

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The flexible volunteer agreement is not a legally binding contract and therefore may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

What happens when I get started?

You will be shown this document once you have registered with us as a volunteer, and will be given the opportunity to ask any questions you might have. You will be asked to sign the final page of this document to show that you have read and understand its contents.

This document is the extent of your induction, and further information and training will be provided if relevant to the activities you will undertake on behalf of SHP.

As a flexible volunteer, you will also be asked to sign-in each time you participate in any of our activities to ensure compliance with health and safety, and our safeguarding codes of practice. You will be briefed on specific health and safety information and guidance for how to perform each activity and task before they commence.

Assigned Volunteers

What is an Assigned Volunteer?

Our Assigned Volunteers adopt specific roles within the organisation and take ownership of specific tasks. They are a little different from our flexible volunteer role, as they usually require specific skills and experiences to carry them out.

We try to support our flexible volunteers to develop into these roles. If you are interested in developing any specific skills of your own, or have a skillset which you feel may be of specific use to SHP, please contact your volunteer coordinator.

The assigned volunteer agreement is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. No employment relationship will be created.

What happens when I get started?

The induction for assigned volunteers is a little more detailed, and we will help to prepare and support you to fulfil your role. Initially, this is likely to be in the form of an informal induction, although it might be accompanied with training relevant to the tasks which you will be performing as a volunteer.

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Areas that are likely to be covered during your induction include meeting other members of the team, a tour of the area you will be working in, and any relevant health and safety information.

We support training and development relevant to your role and ask all volunteers to participate in training as required and, if requested, help with the training of other volunteers. Training will not normally involve attendance at a course. For example, it could take the form of coaching by a colleague, or learning 'as you go'.

How will you know what activities I have been attending?

Each time you attend an activity, event, work party or project session, you will be asked to sign in using this [time recorder](#) or a paper sign up sheet. This will ask for your start and finish time, so that your hours can be tracked, and we can see how much time you have dedicated to supporting us. Volunteer time is useful information as it can help towards grant and project applications as it provides evidence of support in kind. We also aim to reward and recognise your contributions and can use this information to support any requests for references.

Specialist Volunteer Roles and DBS Checks

For some assigned volunteer roles, it might be necessary to run additional screening (beyond standard reference and/or identity checks). The need for any additional screening, such as the DBS check (formally known as the CRB check) is limited to very specific circumstances and will be assessed on a role-by-role basis. If additional screening is required, SHP will process the application via Voluntary Action Swindon. If the DBS check reveals a criminal conviction, then we will consider whether this precludes the applicant from volunteering in the role. This will depend on factors such as the nature of the conviction and the nature of the role. All decisions will be made in accordance with our [Equalities and Diversity Policy](#).

Key Policies and Volunteer Guidance

The following guidelines are in place to ensure that all volunteer activities remain enjoyable for everyone, and to ensure that all of us are protected from harm. Please review our [Volunteer Policy](#).

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Induction, Training and Support

We will help to prepare and support you to fulfil your role. Initially this is likely to be an informal induction, although it might be accompanied with training relevant to the tasks which you will perform as a volunteer. Areas that are likely to be covered during your induction include meeting other volunteers, an introduction to the team and the area you will be working in, and any relevant health and safety information.

We support training and development relevant to your role and ask all volunteers to participate in training as required and, if requested, help with the training of other volunteers. Training will not normally involve attendance at a course. For example, it could take the form of coaching by a colleague, or learning 'as you go'.

Drop-in sessions allow volunteers to try out activities and projects to see what they enjoy the most, and where they feel their skills are best suited. As these are structured in the form of group sessions, volunteers are briefed on the activity at the beginning of the session, and are informed of any health and safety information that is relevant. You will be asked to sign in and out of these sessions and will be asked if you have read this document.

1-1 sessions with your volunteer coordinator can be arranged at a mutually convenient time if there is any additional support required. Please speak to your volunteer coordinator to make such arrangements.

Use of Equipment

If your volunteer role requires the use of SHP equipment, you will be given an adequate health and safety briefing on its use and likelihood to cause injury. Please note: SHP owned equipment should only be used for SHP business and activity.

When using email or the internet you are expected to act sensibly and responsibly to ensure that the Trust is not endangered in terms of cyber security, prosecution, or reputational damage. If you would like further support and guidance for how to prevent these risks, please get in touch with your volunteer coordinator.

Audio Visual Consent

The Trust is committed to ensuring that volunteers are fully engaged, feel valued and can receive the maximum benefit from their experience. We try to recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers as widely as possible, including a positive and cheerful working environment, volunteer case studies, photographs, and maybe news stories in the press or on our website. We will ask you to complete an audio-visual consent form upon formal appointment as a Volunteer.

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Customer Service

If you meet the general public as a part of your Volunteer role, we expect you to adhere to our customer service standards. We must remain courteous, professional, warm and knowledgeable. You should remember the following:

- **A WARM WELCOME.** We offer all our visitors/customers a warm, courteous and professional welcome, and a smile!
- **A GREAT SERVICE.** We will provide informative and helpful responses to visitors/customers at all times. If we have any doubts, we will ask a more experienced volunteer.
- **SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE.** We will ensure that the environment is safe, secure and accessible for everyone as far as is reasonably possible.

Outside Activities and Occupations

SHP is not concerned with volunteers' personal and professional lives, providing that:

- SHP premises or property are not used for outside activities (without prior permission).
- They do not involve the use of SHP confidential information.
- There is no potential for conflict of interests.
- There is no possibility of impact to the reputation of SHP.

Conflicts of Interest

You should seek guidance if you think an activity or task you are involved with, or wish to undertake, may be classed as a conflict of interest. If in doubt, speak to your volunteer coordinator. Volunteers who sometimes take on paid work for the Trust should be clear about the boundaries between the two roles.

Age

SHP aims to open volunteering opportunities to everyone over the age of 16 who is able to fulfil the role offered/asked for. There are no upper age restrictions for volunteering – a volunteer's ability to complete a task or role will be assessed on an individual basis. Decisions on such matters are made in discussion with the volunteer concerned and are at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator. Anyone under the age of 18, or a vulnerable adult over the age of 16, should be accompanied by a responsible adult supervisor at all times.

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Ability

If you are unable to perform a task, it is our responsibility to make adjustments that take into account your capability. However, volunteers should not put themselves or others at risk by taking on roles for which they are not fit for. As a volunteer, It is your responsibility to inform us if you do not feel that you can carry out any task that is being set.

There may be times where we do not feel that you are suitable for a task, and as a result we may politely ask that you not participate. This is not because we do not value your dedication and commitment, but because we have a duty to keep everyone safe, and it may be that you would require more assistance to complete a task than we are able to provide.

Smoking

SHP buildings are smoke and e-cigarette free. Volunteers may smoke if they wish, but must do so in an outside space where they do not impact on visitors or other volunteers. Where possible, designated smoking areas should be used and care should be taken not to smoke in areas which will inconvenience the Railway Village community.

Behaviours

It is important that anyone representing SHP understands and is able to follow our **Behaviour Code of Practice**. Each behaviour applies to everyone, although you may identify more with some than others, depending on your role. We believe these kinds of behaviours are vital ingredients in helping us to be a really effective organisation. If we all stick to these, we will best achieve our goals and make volunteering at the Trust a pleasure for all.

Behaviour Code of Practice:

- **Respecting Others:** We respect that different people bring different skills, ways of doing things and experiences. We recognise and thank everyone for their contribution, and celebrate our combined achievements.
- **Communicating Openly:** We share information in an open and honest way. We listen actively to others, always trying to give constructive feedback in a friendly way.
- **Deciding Effectively:** We consult proportionally, considering the views of others. We are open-minded and prepared to discuss things, supporting group decisions that are made, regardless of our personal views.

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- **Being Accountable:** We take responsibility for our own actions and mistakes. We keep our promises and demonstrate integrity.
- **Leading Effectively:** We try to set clear, achievable objectives and encourage improved performance when necessary by providing constructive criticism. We encourage, motivate and support others, and respect their personal circumstances
- **Working Together:** We support each other to deliver the various activities the SHP does, from the most academic elements to the emptying of the bins. We look for opportunities to work with others while recognising and valuing our differences.
- **Dedicated to the mission:** We are committed to the SHP and its overarching mission of restoring the Mechanics' Institute.

Safeguarding

Protecting people and safeguarding those who come into contact with our organisation is a priority for us, and we take all reasonable steps to protect them from harm.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Individuals and groups within our community that may benefit from our work
- Our staff, trustees, members and volunteers
- Other people who may come into contact with us such as the public

Further details of this can be found in our **Safeguarding Policy**. We have also produced useful guides that will help you understand this policy, and tips for working with others so that we can all work together to keep everyone safe from harm.

Feedback and Recognition

We recognise that as a volunteer it is important that you receive feedback on your performance and a regular opportunity to review what you do. As a flexible volunteer,

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feedback will often be provided “on the job”, however, we will regularly review your performance and provide feedback where appropriate. If you are an assigned Volunteer, we will agree with you at the start of your journey with us whether any formal performance review is required.

That being said, we would like to receive any feedback that you might have about us. If you are looking for new challenges, or find that you really dislike a task you thought you would enjoy, please contact your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible to discuss this.

The relationship between SHP and our valued volunteers is one of mutual benefit. It is expected that any problems which arise will be resolved through reasonableness and goodwill. We recognise that as a volunteer you need feedback on your performance and also to have a regular opportunity to review what you do.

If you are unable to perform a task it is your responsibility to let your volunteer coordinator know so they can make reasonable adjustments where possible, taking into account your capability. However, volunteers cannot be allowed to put themselves or others at risk by taking on roles for which they are not fit for.

Protecting SHP and its Reputation

Insurance

SHP is insured so that if the organisation is found to be negligent, volunteers, staff and members of the public can make a claim against it. The insurance covers the organisation rather than the individual, and extends to include volunteers acting on behalf of SHP.

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Indemnity Statement

As a volunteer, if you are injured; your property is damaged; or you are involved in a situation involving injury or damage to a third party, you must ensure the incident is recorded and the relevant people notified. Please notify your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible so they can assist you with recording such information.

If you commit an act or omission in the normal course of your voluntary work, whether during your work or after its termination, and it causes you or SHP to suffer, or gives rise to any liability of you or SHP to any third party for loss or damage, or legal or other expenses (other than under criminal law for fraud or dishonesty or willful misconduct):

- SHP shall indemnify you (the volunteer) against any loss or damage or legal or other expenses which you may suffer and against any such liability which you may have to a third party.
- SHP shall not be entitled to indemnity or contribution from you (the volunteer) against any such loss or damage or legal or other such expenses which it suffers or against any such liability which it may have to a third party.

These arrangements are subject to the volunteer:

- Reporting any such claims to SHP immediately they become known.
- Not making any admission to or negotiating or agreeing any settlement with a third party without the prior written consent of SHP.
- Instructing a solicitor approved by SHP in terms required by him or her.

SHP will not be liable if the volunteer has been grossly negligent or reckless and acted in such a way that their actions were wholly incompatible with their duties.

‘Our Good Name’

As a volunteer you are an ambassador for SHP and give a vital impression to the public. We hope you will share your volunteering experiences and encourage others to join us too. We ask that you abide by our policies and procedures to help us make sure that SHP good name is untarnished.

Communications with the Media

Good media communications are vital to any organisation. Dealing with the media is an increasingly complex and sophisticated discipline, please refer all media enquiries and requests to promote any projects to a SHP representative and/or your volunteer

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coordinator. Volunteers must not contact the media without the express permission of SHP.

Volunteer Complaint Process

If you have any reasons which make you concerned or unhappy, please approach and confide in a trusted person.

We have a two-stage complaint process, (informal and formal), which you should be aware of and an overview will be provided during induction. If this should not happen for any reason, approach a Trustee who will be able to help and provide advice.

Please refer to the separate [Volunteer Complaint Process](#) and associated form.

In addition, volunteers must also report any activities or behaviours which they see or be informed of which may impact SHP.

The relationship between SHP and the volunteer is one of mutual benefit. It is expected that any problems which arise will be resolved through reasonableness and goodwill.

Occasionally volunteers may have a disagreement with another volunteer, or paid member of staff. In the first instance it is hoped the situation can be resolved satisfactorily by the volunteer and volunteer coordinator. If an issue remains unresolved or the volunteer feels unable to do this, the volunteer should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of SHP.

A response should usually be given within 21 days. SHP will ensure that the volunteer's views are treated seriously and dealt with fairly.

Where there is alleged serious misconduct, a volunteer may be asked to leave the site until the matter is investigated and resolved. This does not mean that we see that volunteer as the problem, but provides an opportunity to investigate and consider the matter. Volunteers will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation at reasonable intervals.

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Useful Contacts

Building Manager

For any facilities, access or building related issues or enquiries, contact Andy at: andywhite.white10@gmail.com; 07568305053.

Bookings Officer

For all booking enquiries, please contact Abbie at: bookings@mechanics-trust.org.uk

Community Engagement Officer

For any of the following enquiries:

- External Communications
- Memberships and Volunteers
- Events and Projects

Contact Dan at: dan@mechanics-trust.org.uk; 07955373172.

Designated Safeguarding Officer

If anyone is in immediate danger, please call 999. For any other safeguarding queries or concerns, contact: safeguarding@mechanics-trust.org.uk

Chair

Cassie Newland: chair@mechanics-trust.org.uk

Trustees

Should you wish to contact any other individual trustees, please contact your volunteer coordinator who can put you in touch.

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Glossary of Terms and Jargon

HAZ - Heritage Action Zone

WORKS - The conservation area geographical boundary

SBC - Swindon Borough Council

SHP - Swindon Heritage Preservation

MIT - Mechanics' Institution Trust

CARIG - Central Area Resident Improvement Group

SCV - Swindon Civic Voice

SSPC - South Swindon Parish Council

MMT - Mechanics' Maintenance Team

MM - Mechanics' Meetings

H&CC - Heritage and Culture Club

VAS - Voluntary Action Swindon

GWR - Great Western Railway

CCC - Central Community Centre

RVM - Railway Village Museum

BCC - Bakers Community Cafe

Cricks' - Cricketers

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Volunteer Declaration

I confirm that I have reviewed, and completed where necessary, the following documents:

- Volunteer Enquiry / Sign up form
- Audio Visual Consent Form
- Health and Safety Guide
- Behaviour Code of Practice Guide
- Safeguarding Code of Practice Guide

Actions / Notes:

I confirm that I have read and understand this document in its entirety, and should I have any questions or concerns, I know who to contact.

Full Name:

Date:

Signed:
