

Developing a Volunteer Policy

A Volunteer Policy is the foundation on which your organisation's involvement of volunteers should be based. The policy should be available to all staff, volunteers and clients so they understand what is expected of them and how they should be treated and treat others. The policy helps ensure fairness and consistency. You may want to include the following:

Statement of Intent

This should include what you do, why you involve volunteers and how they can contribute to your organisation. It is useful to state that volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff.

Recruitment and Selection

An outline of how you will recruit and select volunteers. Think about answering the following questions:

- How will you advertise your volunteering opportunities?
- Is there a selection process? (For example, will you interview potential volunteers or offer them a trial period?)

Induction and Training

It is important to induct new volunteers to your organisation, much in the way you would induct a new member of staff. You may want to develop a Volunteer Induction Pack that includes things like the organisation's policies and procedures, annual report and structure so that they know about the environment they will be volunteering in.

It is also important to offer volunteers any **appropriate** training they need. You should only offer training that is of direct relevance to the role. This is to avoid creating a contract of employment. Your policy should include what training may be offered or a if there is a training budget per volunteer.

Diversity

Many organisations are now becoming aware of the benefits of having a diverse volunteer involvement. A diverse group of volunteers makes your organisation more welcoming to, and more representative of, the local community. Involving people from differing backgrounds, ages, cultures, genders and outlooks helps throw up new ideas and fresh approaches. Your policy should outline how your organisation will take a positive approach to diversity, for example, advertising through organisations that work with specific groups and ensuring your website is accessible to those who are visually impaired.

Expenses

It is good practice to only reimburse actual out of pocket expenses, such as travel expenses. Your policy should state what expenses volunteers expect to have reimbursed and how this will happen.

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Support and Supervision

In most cases volunteers should have a named supervisor and regular supervision meetings to discuss any problems or issues that may arise. The kind of support that you provide for volunteers will depend on the type of work they are involved in. See Information Sheet 5.4: Volunteer Support and Supervision.

Health and Safety

The legal obligations of organisations towards their volunteers with regard to health and safety are less clear than they are for employees. Nevertheless, organisations do have legal obligations towards their volunteers, and it's good practice to treat them with equal consideration when it comes to health and safety.

Organisations have a duty of care to avoid exposing volunteers to risks to their health and safety. Your policy should outline how your organisation ensure the health and safety of its volunteers (this could be cross referenced with your organisation's overall health and safety policy), such as carrying out risk assessments of events and ensuring they are aware of appointed First Aid Officers.

Further reading: The Health and Safety Executive has web pages offering advice for voluntary organisations involving volunteers at: www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/index.htm

Problem Solving

It is good practice to avoid using the same grievance and disciplinary policy for both staff and volunteers, and the term 'problem solving procedures' helps to differentiate between the two. Your policy should outline what process your organisation has in place to deal with complaints from, or about, volunteers. See Information Sheet 5.6: Writing a Problem Solving Policy.

Review

Like any policy, it is a good idea to state how often you will review your Volunteer Policy, such as every year or every two years.

For further advice and support on volunteering, including accessing our volunteer brokerage service, please contact the Volunteer Centre North Tyneside on 0191 643 2639 or email volunteering@voda.org.uk.

North Tyneside VODA
Queen Alexandra Campus
Hawkeys Lane
North Shields
NE29 9BZ