

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

A Code of Conduct (CoC) is an internal document that should be embedded in, and reflective of, the organisation's mission, values and aims.

It is a document that outlines the organisation's expectations regarding volunteers' behaviour and motivation whilst they act as representatives of the organisation.

It is a document outlining collective and individual responsibility related to volunteer roles and should be clearly explained during recruitment, induction and, where necessary, referred to in support sessions.

The CoC underpins the professional standards of the organisation and the role that volunteers play in the community and should reflect the organisation's aims and values.

It should promote good practice in volunteer management by clearly outlining the culture of the organisation and should promote safeguarding for everyone who engages with the volunteers.

A clear CoC is an important element of recruitment that demonstrates how an organisation complies with the law in terms of volunteer recruitment; it encompasses references to the organisation's policies, procedures and the behaviour expected of volunteers.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which you communicate your policies and procedures to volunteers.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT VS CODE OF CONDUCT

Coordinators may employ volunteer agreements, informal documents that focus on agreements with an individual specific to their role, allow for reasonable adjustments and details mutual expectations.

A CoC is a collective agreement to which all members of a cohort of volunteers agree. It covers expectations regarding behaviour, personal responsibilities and team responsibilities, including care for other members of the team. By agreeing a collective CoC an organisation can foster team ownership of collaboration and equity.

A CoC creates organisational standards and makes volunteers accountable for their role in the delivery of an organisations offer that demonstrates a respectful, caring and professional approach to those with whom the organisation engages.

As a result, written codes of conduct and agreements can become frameworks whereby individual and organisational performance can be measured and impact assessed.

THE COMPONENTS OF A VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

When developing a Volunteer Code of Conduct, there are six fundamental ethical areas to be considered:

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- Equity
- Respect
- Honesty
- Accountability
- Loyalty
- Integrity

EQUITY

Everyone in the organisation, including volunteers, must commit to fairness and equity both in their specific role and general engagement in a way that ensures that all the workforce treat each other equally.

There are nine characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, which are:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity

The CoC will explain that if a volunteer discriminates, directly or indirectly, against another then they could face being removed from their role.

The CoC should state volunteers are expected to be non-judgemental and willing to challenge others regarding their behaviour in accordance with agreed protocols.

RESPECT

The CoC should state the expectations of the individual and the team as a whole; all members should:

- Respect their role boundaries and be represent their organisation in a professional manner.
- Respect other cultures and beliefs and use appropriate language and behaviour when engaging in their role.
- Respect others' opinions but also challenge disrespectful and/or harmful behaviour and language.
- Respect boundaries, actively listen and respond and follow due process when a coordinator needs to be made aware of issues.

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HONESTY

The CoC should state the importance of telling the truth.

- This means taking accountability for words actions and deeds: “Think before you speak and act”.
- Be transparent: it's okay to make a mistake, just tell the coordinator and don't deflect blame onto others: accept responsibility and help to fix the problem.
- All record-keeping and financial interactions should be transparent.
- A strong team thrives when “gossip, secrets and rumours” are dealt with immediately and effectively.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The CoC should clearly state that trustees and the coordinator will ensure compliance with the “problem-solving and complaints policy” so that the charity owns the relationship with the volunteers and their right to due process should any concerns be raised in their roles.

This should include a robust training and induction process, clear definition of roles, setting expectations, including proactive communication, and recognising the value of volunteering in the delivery of the organisation's services.

Individuals need to own their role and their actions and their position of responsibility within the larger team and in the delivery of the overall objectives in the volunteer project.

LOYALTY

The CoC should clearly state expectations of the volunteers to be positive representatives of the organisation and to be fully aware of their part its the values, aims and mission.

Loyalty to others can establish a strong trust basis within the team and this can lead to more effective communication and a better functioning team.

INTEGRITY

Integrity means doing what is right and honest, even under the most difficult circumstances.

- Volunteers will agree to abide by all organisational policies and procedures to safeguard the organisation, themselves and others accessing the organisation's services.