

Developing a Volunteer Policy

This information sheet is for organisations that have identified a role for volunteers and are ready to develop their volunteer policies.

Volunteer-involving organisations will find it helpful to have in place a volunteer policy as it can provide your organisation with a framework for establishing a volunteer programme.

Introduction

A volunteer policy is the foundation on which your organisation's involvement of volunteers should be based. It provides consistent approach and a set of guiding principles which help with decision making and defining roles and relationships between various stakeholders of the organisation.

It gives structure and consistency to all elements within your organisation that affect volunteers; including recruitment, expenses, health and safety etc and it is the key to involving a diverse range of volunteers as it helps to define the role of volunteers within the organisations and how they can be expected to be treated.

Why does my organisation need a volunteer policy?



Having clear policies on volunteer involvement in your group or organisation is a good way to ensuring everyone within your organisation is included and that each person is clear about the roles of volunteers within the organisation. A good volunteer policy will help your organisation and the people within it:

- To decide when involving volunteers is appropriate and when it is not;
- To make decisions about who can volunteer and in what capacity;
- To determine how your organisation will recruit, support and supervise and manage volunteers.

A volunteer policy will not only explain best practice guidance, but will also describe the values and principles that steer your organisation and will help you to shape your approach to involving volunteers.

The specific policies that you may need will depend on what your organisation does, and whether you decide to develop a new set of policies (volunteer policies) or include volunteers into your existing ones. Whichever method your organisation adopts, you should have one policy that describes the relationship between your organisation and its volunteers.

First Steps

Think about why you are involving volunteers and how they will fit into the day to day life and work of your organisation.

What should a Volunteer Policy Contain?

A volunteer policy should describe the relationship between your organisation and volunteers, and should include:

The Organisation

A statement on why the organisation involves volunteers. The statement should set out the principles behind your decision to involve volunteers, it should also highlight how it will benefit the organisation and the wider community, as well as the volunteers themselves. A positive statement can be a good way of showing that you are a caring organisation which puts great value upon its volunteers. For example, it may include:

- a) A short statement on who the organisation is set up to help, when the organisation is open and the range of activities;

- b) Where volunteering fits into the organisation (this may be included in the organisations Mission Statement or Aims and Objectives);
- c) A statement of intent, setting out the principles that will inform your organisation's involvement of volunteers, (for example, this is where to state that the organisation will not use volunteers to replace paid staff);
- d) Describe why volunteers are involved in the organisation as this will help volunteers to understand exactly how their time and skills contribute towards the work of your organisation;
- e) If the organisation also supports internships, work placements or other unpaid schemes, it should be acknowledged whether, and to what extent, individuals on these schemes are covered by the volunteer policy, or whether there are other relevant policies in place.

Commitment to Diversity

A statement about the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity outlining how volunteers from a range of backgrounds will be encouraged, welcomed and supported.

empowering the community

Recruitment and Screening

An account of what steps are involved in the recruitment and selection process, such as how you will advertise, whether you will use application forms, who conducts selection interviews, what you do about references, or if police checks are required. Say what will happen if an applicant is considered unsuitable for a particular role. For example, it may include:

- a) How volunteers are recruited
- b) The interview process
- c) Whether or not references and/or police checks are taken up
- d) Details of expenses and provision of any clothing or equipment

Task Description

Descriptions of volunteer roles should be consistent across your organisation and comply with your volunteer policies. The volunteer policy should outline and make reference to volunteer roles and task descriptions. For example, it may include:

- a) An outline that volunteers will be given a written description of the tasks they will be asked to do;
- b) A statement that volunteers may discuss changing these tasks if appropriate.

Responsibilities of the organisation towards volunteers

What will you do if a volunteer has a grievance with your organisation? Or if a volunteer has acted in an appropriate manner? Make sure that you have clear procedures in place to deal with complains by or about volunteers. It is a good ideas to have separate procedures form those for paid staff, both to ensure that they are as clear and user-friendly as possible, and to keep some distinctiveness between staff and volunteers. For example, it may include:

- a) General statements in relation to induction, training, support and supervision, etc. Ensure that there is a common understanding, common standards of practice across the organisations and that volunteers are effectively included as active participants in the organisation;
- b) Understand the level of commitment offered by the volunteer and outline what the volunteer should do if they are unable to attend.organisations and that volunteers are effectively included as active participants in the organisation.

Responsibilities of volunteers

Indicate the level of professionalism you require from volunteers. For example:

- a) A statement in relation to behaviour, dress code, time keeping, reporting requirements, honesty, confidentiality etc;
- b) A statement about volunteering whilst claiming state benefits. Volunteers who claim most state benefits need to inform the Benefits Agency if undertaking voluntary work. (It is not the responsibility of the organisation to inform the Benefits Agency).

Training and Support

Many volunteer-involving organisations run their own tailor-made training course. Volunteers will want to be confident that they are fulfilling their roles well, others may want to develop their skills as widely as possible. Include a statement outlining the type of training and support which will be provided by the organisation for volunteers. For example, it may include:

- a) The organisation's induction programme for all new volunteers
- b) The purpose of training and any expectations arising from that training
- c) Volunteer team and support meetings
- d) Volunteer representation on management committee
- e) How ongoing support and supervision will be offered
- f) The person who has responsibility for co-ordinating the work of volunteers and volunteer's "named person"

Insurance and Health & Safety

It is in everyone's best interest to ensure that your organisation has an appropriate level of insurance cover for liabilities and assets including any risk to potential committee members, volunteers and staff. It is good practice to treat volunteers with equal consideration to that of paid employees when it comes to health and safety. For example:

- a) Make reference to your organisation's health and safety policy along with details of procedures relevant to volunteers;
- b) Include a statement about how volunteers are insured.

empowering the community

Confidentiality

If the organisation works with vulnerable clients, what procedures do you have in place to protect both them and your volunteers. For example, it may include:

- a) Statement outlining the importance of confidentiality
- b) Outline how confidentiality operates

Volunteer expenses

It's good practice to reimburse a volunteer for out of pocket expenses incurred during the course of their volunteering. Include a statement detailing the types of out of pocket expenses that volunteers can claim, and the procedures for claiming. For example, it may include:

- a) Reimbursements offered including travel expenses, lunch etc.
- b) Car mileage rates including mileage allowance and details of tax implications of mileage payments

Settling differences

Most people's experiences of volunteering are positive. If things do go wrong it is important to work out a course of action and see if the organisation and the volunteer can work things out together.

Include a statement outlining the procedure for what happens when there are disputes or differences, showing that the organisation has a commitment to listening and settling disputes quickly and amicably.

Other relevant information

Details of any other policies that include volunteers and where these policies can be found, such as:

- Equal opportunities
- Health and safety
- Confidentiality
- Data protection,
- Policy/Procedure for reclaiming out of pocket expenses
- Details of insurance cover

Reviewing the policy

Include a statement setting out the procedure set for how the volunteer policy will be maintained and reviewed as part of the governance of your organisation.

empowering the community

empowering the community

Contact us:

tel: 01482 324474
fax: 01482 580565
email: enquiries@hull-cvs.co.uk
office: The Strand, 75 Beverley Road, Hull, HU3 1XL
website: www.hullcvs.org.uk

November 2017



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

