

Voluntary and Community Action

Writing a Volunteer Policy

Volunteering Information Sheet No. 2

March 2009

A Volunteering Policy sets out your organisation's approach and commitment to volunteers. It should include things like recruitment, induction and training, expenses, support for volunteers, equal opportunities and problem solving procedures.

Volunteering Information Sheets

The Volunteer Centre has produced a series of Information Sheets on:

- setting up and managing a volunteer programme
- recruitment and development of volunteers and trustees.



They are available to download from our website or by contacting the Volunteer Centre (details on back page).

As volunteer policies should be written to meet the specific individual needs of each organisation, it makes sense to have as much consultation on them as possible from both staff and volunteers.

Policies are not written to remain unread in files. They need to be clear and relevant. The language used should be straight forward and direct; you may have volunteers with English as a second language, for example.

Some organisations have one big policy that covers everything, most will have a shorter separate Volunteer Policy that refers to other policies - e.g. equal opportunities, health and safety and so on.

There is no one blueprint for a policy, but most policies should include an introduction explaining the aims of the organisation and how volunteers enable it to deliver the services and/or activities to meet these aims. This is also a good place to make a statement of intent about how volunteers will be treated by the organisation.

Recruitment

How will you recruit volunteers? What will your interviewing arrangements be? How do take up

references and/or carry out Criminal Records Bureau checks? How will you treat prospective volunteers who have additional support needs or who are not suitable for the role?

Induction and Training

Do you need a volunteer handbook/induction pack? What training do the volunteers need to start their roles? What training might they need to develop in their role?

Expenses

Volunteers should not be out of pocket through their involvement with the organisation. What arrangements are there in place for volunteers to claim their expenses?

Support for Volunteers

Who will supervise the volunteers? What arrangements will there be for the volunteer to discuss their role with their supervisor?

Code of Conduct

How do you expect volunteers to behave whilst working in your organisation. Do you have separate policies on confidentiality?



Health and Safety

Do you have special procedures for volunteers who work alone or who visit clients in their home? How will you make volunteers aware of your organisations Health and Safety Policy?

Equal Opportunities

Are volunteers covered by your equal opportunities policy? How are you showing your commitment to diversity?

Problem Solving

Do you have procedures for dealing with complaints by or about volunteers?

Other items that could be mentioned in a policy include a commitment to involve volunteers in the day to day life of the organisation; through volunteer forums, attendance at staff meetings and so on. It is also a place to mention that volunteers are covered by your insurance policies.

The exact format is up to you. Bear in mind that it should be clear and easy to use. Several small well headed sections are easier to read than a large block of text.

Further Information and Resources

For further information, and model or example Volunteer Policies, contact the Development Officer at Voluntary and Community Action or review the following resources:

- The Good Practice Guide for Everyone who Works with Volunteers, K Bowgett, K Dickie and M Restall, Volunteering England, 2nd Edition, 2002.
- Volunteer England website, www.volunteering.org.uk

Other Information Sheets in this series include:

- Recruiting Volunteers
- Creating Volunteer Roles, Descriptions and Person Specifications
- Marketing your Volunteering Opportunities
- Criminal Records Bureau and Screening of Paid Staff and Volunteers
- Induction of Volunteers
- Dealing with Volunteer Problems.

POLICIES ARE NOT WRITTEN TO REMAIN UNREAD IN FILES. THEY NEED TO BE CLEAR AND RELEVANT. INVOLVE BOTH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WHEN WRITING UP A VOLUNTEER POLICY.



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How can the Volunteer Centre help?

If you are a voluntary organisation or community group operating in southern Bedfordshire, we can help by:

- promoting your volunteering opportunities and signposting volunteers to your organisation
- providing information, guidance and training in all aspects of good practice and volunteer management.

Please give us a call on 01525 850559 or email volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk to arrange a meeting.