

Writing a Volunteer Policy

Introduction

A volunteer policy gives important guidance on how an organisation will engage and involve a volunteer. A volunteer policy is a key document for a volunteer programme. It enables an organisation to look at the benefits and challenges that come with working with volunteers, and gives the organisation a consistent way to approach the involvement of volunteers across the whole organisation. A volunteer policy helps to ensure that everyone involved in the organisation including Board Members, funders, staff and volunteers understand and value volunteers' involvement.

A policy also demonstrates that the organisation is serious and professional about the involvement of volunteers, and that their involvement is planned as part of the whole organisation's activities rather than as an ad hoc activity that sits alongside the main organisation.



Why should your organisation have a volunteer policy?

- **Commitment** - a volunteer policy demonstrates an organisation's commitment to its volunteer programme and its individual volunteers. It shows that care and thought has gone into the volunteer programme.
- **Consistency** - volunteers are a diverse range of people. Being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are consistent and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly.
- **Clarity** - a policy allows volunteers to know where they stand and where they can turn to if they feel that things are going wrong.
- **Unity** - it also helps ensure that your paid staff and wider management structures fully understand why volunteers are involved and what role the volunteers have within the organisation.

The process of writing a volunteer policy is as important as having the document itself.

- Consider exactly why your organisation wants to involve volunteers and how they fit into the day-to-day life and work of the organisation.
- Consult as widely as possible when drawing up the policy. The more input there is, the more relevant the policy is likely to be.

What should the volunteer policy focus on?

Your policy should reflect the unique needs of your organisation - there is no blueprint for volunteer policies. Keep it short - most organisations have a relatively short policy as a statement of intent, with the day-to-day issues covered in separate policies or a volunteer handbook.

We've prepared an [example volunteering policy](#) to help you get started. Please feel free to copy and paste the text and, and adapt it as you see fit.

What should the volunteer policy cover?

Start with an explanation of what your organisation does and why it wants to involve volunteers in its work. Explain in what way volunteers' input helps your organisations aims.

- A statement of intent e.g. why your organisation involves volunteers and to what aim
- Some information about your organisations recruitment process
- Role descriptions, induction and training for volunteers, trial period, expenses such as travel, meals, child care etc., support and supervision processes
- How volunteers are insured
- Basic Health and Safety information - signposting volunteers to the main Health and Safety policy
- The complaints procedure - there should be clear procedures in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers, separate from those for paid staff
- Information about how your organisation deals with any problems arising out of volunteer placements
- Information about confidentiality
- Data Protection Information
- Whilst volunteers may not be covered as an employee by equal opportunities legislation, it is good practice to include them in your equal opportunities policy.



Introducing the volunteer policy

Once the policy is written, it is necessary to ensure that it is read, understood and implemented properly as part of the everyday work of your organisation. All staff, volunteers and managers should receive a copy.

The organisation might like to use the policy as a framework for induction meetings with volunteers.

Accessibility

- **Clear English** - any document given to the volunteers should be straightforward to read and understand
- **Identifying needs** - discussing the policy with volunteers at induction helps identify needs; volunteers with English as a second language or a learning disability may require some parts of the policy to be clarified
- **Format** - the policy should be clearly legible for people with sight problems.

Additional Support

If you need any advice or support regarding the information outlined in this resource, Community First Yorkshire can help. Find out more about the volunteering support we offer on our [website](#), or simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

Don't forget, you can advertise your volunteering roles for free on our [Volunteering in North Yorkshire \(VINY\)](#) directory?

Updated: JF/25/03/21