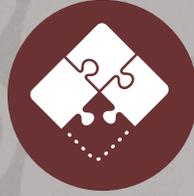


SECTION 3

Managing volunteers



SECTION 3 - Managing Volunteers

Volunteer Policy

A volunteer policy contains information that will be helpful for the volunteer as part of their day-to-day work for the organisation. Think of the policy as a reference guide for the volunteer, a back-up of the information they will receive during their induction. Policy might offer practical advice on health and safety, information on the role of the volunteer co-ordinator, how volunteers will be supervised and even where the tea-making facilities are. So while a volunteer policy might state that all volunteers are entitled to be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses, the policy would inform the volunteer how to make a claim, which forms to fill out, which finance person they must see and so on.

What should be in the policy really depends on your organisation. Some details regarding your organisation's culture may seem perfectly obvious to you but could be mystifying to an outsider. Volunteer policies are a useful resource to complement your induction process.

Areas covered could include:

1. Background information on your organisation
2. What your organisation does and why
3. Day-to-day life in the organisation
4. Expenses
5. Practical health and safety information
6. Policies and Procedures

The following link provides a step-by-step guide to the areas you should consider in your Volunteer Policy.

www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/11/Volunteer-Policy-Framework.pdf

More information about developing a volunteer policy for your organisation can be found in section 4 and 5 at this link www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2018/10/As-Good-As-They-Give-Workbook-1-Planning-Volunteer-Involvement.pdf

Support and Supervision of Volunteers

Support and supervision are important parts of volunteer management. Supervision deals with the work the volunteer is doing and support deals with the volunteer themselves.

A volunteer coordinator/manager has a responsibility to support and supervise volunteers to achieve the best possible outcome. A key part of their role is to ensure that volunteers are happy and feel safe and respected. Volunteers also have responsibilities to their volunteer coordinator which should be clearly defined in the volunteer's role description. It is a two-way street.

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Volunteers should be supported as soon as they step in the door, they need to be welcomed into the organisation and treated well by everyone. Volunteers also need to receive formal support to give them direction, guidance and purpose. They are giving up their personal time to help your organisation grow and develop, and want to know that what they are doing is effective and not a waste of their time.

When delegating work to volunteers, it is important to consider what support and supervision they might require to complete and enjoy the role they undertake. Effective support and supervision encourages a partnership approach, where volunteers feel they are an integral part of the organisation, rather than simply resources to be used.

Volunteers can be the lifeblood of an organisation, quietly pushing the cause forward with their dedication and humility. They are also, however, human beings, who won't just keep working and working on something if they feel invisible.

Here are three golden rules for looking after your volunteers, the simplest, easiest and seemingly obvious things, that can sometimes be forgotten in the madness of running an organisation.

1. Remember names and use them.
2. Return phone calls, emails, expenses the same day.
3. Have a real conversation with every single volunteer.

Different Ideas to Support and Supervise Volunteers

- Initial briefing meeting as part of induction
- Peer to peer support
- Incorporate volunteers into your organisation: volunteers should be included in your organisational chart and given a copy so they can identify where their role fits into the bigger picture
- Buddying systems
- Complete an annual review process where volunteers fill in questionnaires about their roles
- Briefing meetings before and after volunteer shifts and activities
- Give volunteers access to services: volunteers should be treated like paid staff and given the opportunity to access all the services available to paid employees
- Volunteer team meetings
- Send out volunteer newsletters by email that highlight the great work of your volunteers
- Informal support: saying thank you to a volunteer
- Set up a Facebook volunteer group
- One to One support: organise regular catch-ups with the volunteer coordinator or manager
- Formal supervision: clear direction on who to report to and who their supervisor reports to
- Reviews and formal supervision meetings: these should have set agendas and frameworks

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- Provide name badges and uniforms (if appropriate) to build team spirit and help volunteers feel part of the organisation
- Give constructive feedback
- Have an open-door policy

Volunteer Training

The purpose of training is to ensure that volunteers can carry out their volunteering role as effectively as possible. Training must be well planned and appropriate to the needs of the organisation and to the needs of the individual volunteer and their specific role. It may be best to train your volunteers as a team, or you may be able to offer individual training. Ongoing or refresher training may be required to keep volunteers' skills fresh, or to enable them to develop within the organisation and to take on further tasks.

Styles of Training:

1. Volunteer inductions
2. On-the-job training
3. Practical demonstrations
4. In house training
5. Work shadowing
6. Buddying/mentoring systems
7. Visiting other organisations/inviting outside organisations in
8. Attending conferences, workshops, lectures, seminars, etc.
9. Problem-solving exercises, group discussions etc.
10. External training courses

More information about developing volunteer training, for your organisation, can be found in all sections in this link www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2018/10/As-Good-As-They-Give-Workbook-4-Managing-Volunteer-Training.pdf

Volunteer Recognition and Retention

While volunteers give up their time with no expectation of reward, it is important that volunteer involving organisations thank volunteers for the contribution they have made. Saying thank you and recognising particularly committed or innovative volunteer contributions also helps maintain morale and ensures that volunteers feel supported. Volunteers who feel appreciated and supported are more likely to stay with your organisation and continue to contribute. Being aware of a volunteer's motivations is a useful tool to have, as it can help to steer the volunteer's journey during their time with your organisation.

Some volunteer recognition ideas include:

1. Don't forget to say thank you
2. Ensure they have a way of taking part in the decision-making processes
3. Ask them to make presentations at meetings
4. Organise something during National Volunteers' Week 1 – 7 June each year
5. Offer training and progression
6. Mention volunteers' input at meetings, in the Annual Report on your website etc.

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7. If equipment is required to carry out their role, make sure it works and it is as up to date as you can afford
8. Send Christmas and birthday cards
9. Organise a social event, outing or party to say thank you
10. Produce a newsletter for volunteers or include them in an existing newsletter

Exit Interviews

If you haven't managed to retain your volunteers, then one obvious way to find out why they are leaving is to ask them. Exit interviews, questionnaires or informal chats might reveal issues in your organisation that need addressing.

Some questions you might ask are:

1. Do people know what is involved when they volunteer for you?
2. Does the information that enquirers receive provide a clear picture of what will be expected of them when they volunteer?
3. Do volunteers receive role descriptions?
4. Are volunteers taken seriously within the organisation?
5. Are problems and issues raised by volunteers dealt with efficiently and effectively?
6. Are you clear about reimbursing expenses to volunteers?
7. Are there clear lines of communication within the organisation?
8. Do the volunteers have a designated person to talk to about any concerns or problems they may have?
9. Is the Volunteer Co-ordinator/ Manager easily accessible?
10. Are volunteers clear about the contribution they're making to your organisation, its service users and the wider community?

Even if you don't think there is a problem, exit interviews are a useful tool for monitoring how you engage volunteers within the organisation. Remember that people leaving the organisation are likely to be more candid than they would otherwise be.

However, it's obviously better if the exit interview isn't being conducted by a volunteer's immediate supervisor.

A template to help you conduct exit interviews can be found at this link www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Volunteer-Exit-Questionnaire-Template-1.pdf. You should adapt this template to suit the needs of your organisation.



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Problem Solving

Volunteers are an invaluable resource, but the management of any resource can at times be problematic. Even though you have gone through a fair and detailed recruitment and selection process, with role description, registration form, references and initial chat, and believe that the volunteer you have chosen is right for the task – problems can still occur. There will be minor irritations, which, although not requiring immediate attention, may need to be monitored. At the other end of the scale are the potential or actual crises that require clear thinking and decisive action straight away. Having procedures in place can make it easier to deal with these problems.

There may be times when problems arise with a volunteer which, if they were a member of staff, would be addressed through a grievance or disciplinary procedure. These policies for paid staff are not appropriate when dealing with complaints from or about a volunteer, and instead, there should be a separate problem-solving procedure specifically for volunteers, written in clear, non-jargon, plain English.

Volunteers have the same legal rights as the public (for example, health and safety and data protection), but they are not covered by employment legislation. Having a problem-solving procedure specifically for volunteers, helps to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly, are not discriminated against, understand how to complain, and what their rights are if a complaint is made against them. It also creates consistency

and demonstrates the organisation's commitment to volunteer management best practice. You can minimise problems occurring in the first place by ensuring that you have planned well for volunteer involvement. All complaints should be resolved openly, fairly and quickly.

More information about volunteer recognition, exit interviews and problem solving, for your organisation, can be found in all sections at this link www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2018/10/As-Good-As-They-Give-Workbook-3-Managing-and-Motivating-Volunteers.pdf

You may wish to access the information at the link below which takes you through volunteers and the law. www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/11/Volunteers-The-Law-Information-Sheet-2020.pdf

