

Writing a volunteer policy

A volunteer policy provides a firm foundation on which to involve volunteers within your organisation. It brings consistency and purpose to how volunteers will help you achieve your objectives. It will help you involve a diverse range of volunteers, because it defines the roles of volunteers clearly.

There are **real benefits** in having a policy:

- it clarifies the rationale for involving volunteers
- it demonstrates your commitment to involving volunteers and shows care and thought have gone into developing a volunteering programme.
- it ensures that any decisions about volunteering are not made on an ad hoc basis and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly.
- it enables volunteers to know where they stand, how they can expect to be treated and where to turn if they are unhappy.
- paid staff, senior management and trustees all fully understand why volunteers are involved and what role they play within the organisation.

If your organisation is not yet working with volunteers, drawing up a volunteer policy is the ideal starting point for deciding exactly *how* you will involve volunteers in your activities.

Writing a policy

There is no set format for a volunteer policy. Each organisation has unique needs that will need to be reflected and addressed. The final document should be as short as possible. Below is a guide to the headings you should address:

- **Introduction:** what your organisation does, its main goals and ethos. Why it is involving volunteers. How do volunteers help the organisation achieve its purpose?
- **Recruitment:** what process you use. Whether you use application forms or not, hold an informal chat or a more formal interview, how references are handled, whether you do police checks, etc.
- **Induction and Training:** what the volunteer can expect.
- **Expenses:** what is covered and how expenses will be reimbursed.
- **Supervision and Support:** clarity on who will provide this and how.
- **Insurance:** clear evidence that volunteers are covered.
- **Equal Opportunities and Diversity:** outline the organisation's commitment and how this is put into practice.
- **Health and Safety:** basic information and reference to the organisation's Health & Safety policy (and any other relevant policies).
- **Problem solving or Complaints Procedures:** clear procedures are in place.
- **Confidentiality Statement**

Once the policy is completed the main thing is to ensure that it doesn't just lie on a shelf! All staff and volunteers should be given a copy and encouraged to discuss it. You might put a copy on display. The policy should be reviewed annually and staff and volunteers involved to make sure it is up-to-date and a guide for your practice.