

Paying volunteer expenses

Although people give their time freely they should not be out of pocket through their volunteering. If expenses are not available you could have a situation where only people who can afford to volunteer do so. This clearly has implications for equal opportunities.

What can be reimbursed?

- travel to and from the place of volunteering
- and any travel whilst volunteering
- meals whilst volunteering (generally if the volunteer works more than 4 hours in one day)
- postage, phone calls, stationary etc
- cost of protective clothing
- care of dependants whilst volunteering*

*Whilst it is good practice to reimburse care expenses it is recognised that not all organisations will have the necessary finances to do this.

Making expenses payments

It is very important that only genuine out-of-pocket expenses are paid. You should ask for receipts for your records. Although it might seem easier to pay a lump sum to all volunteers or to round up payments, to do so can lead to a number of problems:

- for tax or benefits calculations the “extra” amount would be seen as a payment;
- regular payments could put the organisation at risk of creating a contract with the volunteer, thus bringing them under employment legislation, including the right to the minimum wage.

Provide a simple form and attach any receipts. Payment in cash is easier as some volunteers will need the money on the day and not everyone has a bank account.

Mileage

The HM Revenue and Customs approved mileage rates for 09/10 are

40p a mile for the first 10,000 miles 25p a mile over 10,000

24p a mile for motorcycles

20p a mile for bicycles

What if volunteers do not want to claim?

Everyone should be encouraged to claim expenses to avoid a situation where some people feel bad about claiming because not everyone does. Covering their own expenses is seen by some volunteers as an additional way of giving to the organisation. If this is the case, they can be encouraged to claim and then gift back the money to the organisation. This way you have an accurate record of how much the volunteer programme costs for future budgeting. If volunteers are tax payers then gift aid can also be claimed on their donation.