

**ESSENTIAL GUIDES**

**YOUR GUIDE TO**

# Writing a Volunteer Policy



# Introduction to Writing a Volunteer Policy

### What is a volunteer policy and why does your organisation need one?

A volunteer policy is a written document that helps define the role of volunteers within the organisation. It clearly explains the organisation's activities and what is expected of volunteers. Having a clear volunteer policy demonstrates your organisation's commitment to its volunteer programme and to individual volunteers. It ensures fairness and consistency in managing volunteers and helps volunteers know where they stand and how they can expect to be treated. Your policy will also help to clarify the position of volunteers *vis-à-vis* paid staff and highlight the value of volunteers to staff and the organisation.

### Where do you start?

A good way to start writing your volunteer policy is to ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ *Why does your organisation want to involve volunteers?*
- ▶ *How do volunteers contribute to the day-to-day life of the organisation and its service users?*

It is valuable at this stage to get input from existing staff, management and existing volunteers. This helps to get a balanced view and creates a sense of 'ownership' for all those involved. It is particularly important to include paid staff in this process, to help reduce any fears that they may have regarding volunteer involvement in the organisation. Consulting with management ensures that the value of volunteers is taken seriously.

### How will you introduce and implement your volunteer policy?

Firstly, the policy can be introduced by giving all staff, management and existing volunteers the opportunity to contribute to its writing. All existing staff and volunteers can then be given a copy of the finished policy, whilst new staff and volunteers can be introduced to the policy as part of their induction to your organization.



It is also useful to have a copy of the policy on display; or you could promote it more creatively, e.g. by having key policy statements alongside extracts from testimonials from existing volunteers, displayed on walls or in different locations around the organisation, together with images of volunteers. Service users can also be given a copy of your volunteer policy, to assure them of the legitimacy of your volunteers.

# What should be included in a volunteer policy?

There are no set rules for writing a volunteer policy, as all organisations are different and your policy will reflect your organisation and your volunteers' needs. It is useful, however, to start with a short introduction to your organisation and why volunteers are involved in its activities.

The next stage is to write a short, introductory, summary 'statement of intent' for key volunteer-related issues, to make clear that these form an integral part of your volunteer programme. Keep these statements brief, however, as this document can be used to signpost volunteers to separate, more detailed 'nuts & bolts' policy documents, which can be part of your 'volunteer handbook'.

You could include brief statements on the following:

- ▶ *Recruitment*
- ▶ *Equal Opportunities & Diversity*
- ▶ *Induction & Training*
- ▶ *Expenses*
- ▶ *Insurance*
- ▶ *Health & Safety*
- ▶ *Confidentiality*
- ▶ *Problem Solving Procedure*

**Remember to make your policy clear and accessible, so that it speaks to and is understood by as wide a range of people as possible.**

### **And finally...**

Review and improve your policy regularly – make it a living document that reflects your organisation and your volunteers' needs.

### **Additional resources:**

In addition to contacting us directly for advice, you can also find more information on the **Hastings Voluntary Action** website at <http://bit.ly/1m8hTJ7> and in the **Volunteering England Good Practice Bank** at <http://bit.ly/1mZQC7e>.