

Supporting and Managing Volunteers



Volunteer induction

When a new volunteer joins your organisation you need to have a process in place to give them all the information that they need to get to know your organisation and feel settled in. Induction should consist of more than simply giving volunteers policies to read and introducing them to other volunteers and staff. Getting the induction process right can help your organisation retain its volunteers for longer and ensure volunteers have positive and rewarding experiences.



[Recruiting Selecting and Inducting Volunteers](#)

You can find details of what to include in your induction process in our information sheet [Recruiting Selecting and Inducting Volunteers](#)



Model Volunteer Agreement

A recommended element of the volunteer induction is to use a 'Volunteer Agreement', to help outline what is expected of the volunteer and what they can expect from you. Take a look at our Model Volunteer Agreement which you can use as a template.

Support and supervision

Volunteers will need support from the organisation to enable them to do their roles well. The level of support and supervision that is appropriate will depend on the role and circumstances, which you should assess in terms of risk.

A good way to supervise volunteers is to have regular 'get togethers' where you can talk about their experiences of volunteering, any successes or difficulties and any support or training they think they might need. This allows you to understand how things are going and get to know the volunteer, and provides them with the chance to give feedback.

Make sure it's clear to everyone who has responsibility for supervising volunteers.

You should make sure that volunteers know who to contact if they have a problem, and when this help is available.

Some volunteer roles will be easier to oversee than others, and you want to make sure that the supervision is appropriate for the role and allows the volunteer to be as independent as possible and creates a positive experience for them.

Training volunteers

It's your organisation's responsibility to make sure volunteers can carry out their role. Informal or formal training (depending on the role) is one way to make sure they're well prepared.

Keep training relevant and appropriate to the volunteer's role and their current skills and experience. This avoids taking up too much of the volunteer's time. It also makes sure training isn't seen as a perk or reward,

which could make the volunteering look like paid work.

If their training is good, volunteers will feel more able to do their role. This is likely to make them want to continue volunteering.

You can also provide development opportunities for volunteers who are interested in increasing their skills and experience to take on additional responsibilities or to progress to another volunteer role. This type of volunteer support can be important in maintaining volunteer interest and satisfaction.

Volunteer expenses

It is good practice to reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses. Details of what can be claimed, and how, may be included in your volunteering policy, or covered in a separate policy. Volunteers will need a claim form in order to claim their expenses, which can be for expenses in advance, or afterwards.



Volunteer Expenses

Our information sheet Volunteer Expenses will provides further information on how to approach this.



Model Expenses Policy

You can adapt our Model Expenses Policy to suit your organisation.

Please note, it is important that you do not provide expenses above and beyond the actual costs incurred by a volunteer.

Thanking volunteers

It is important that volunteers feel valued and know that their contribution to your organisation is appreciated.

A simple 'thank you' would be welcomed by many volunteers, who give their time freely to a cause they care about.

Think about the best way to say thank you to a volunteer depending on the circumstances and culture of the organisation and the character of your volunteers. Some individuals may appreciate a public thanks, but others may find it embarrassing. If you are singling out individuals then make sure that won't cause ill feeling with the people that don't get a thank you! Sometimes a general thank you to celebrate the work of the whole team of volunteers may be best.

Keeping volunteers safe

You have responsibilities towards volunteers to keep them safe. This relates to their health and safety, and also wider safeguarding concerns.

You can find more information on how to approach these issues in our Health and Safety and Safeguarding sections.



Keeping Volunteers

Safe

Please also take a look at our Keeping
Volunteers Safe information sheet.

Advice about safeguarding is available to voluntary organisations through the network of local voluntary councils (CVCs).

Dealing with problems

While we hope you will be able to provide volunteers with rewarding and satisfying volunteer opportunities sometimes things can go wrong.

The aim is usually to handle difficult situations on an informal basis, if possible, by talking to those concerned, clarifying issues and reaching consensus. However, sometimes this is not sufficient.

Organisations are advised to have 'problem solving procedures' in place which are specific to volunteers.

Your approach to handling complaints, difficulties and problems relating to volunteers should form part of the induction of both volunteers and staff (along with other relevant policies). This is so that everyone is clear of the standards expected and what action could be taken if these are not upheld. If you have signed a 'volunteer agreement', this can be a useful document to return to.

Good supervision, support and monitoring processes all help to address issues at the earliest possible stage.



Managing Concerns relating to Volunteers

Our information sheet [Managing](#)

[Concerns relating to Volunteers](#) looks at some of the kinds of problems that most commonly arise, and how your organisation can be well prepared to handle difficulties in a fair, consistent, transparent and respectful manner.

You should make sure that you follow your written policies and procedures for dealing with formal complaints. Depending on the seriousness of the problem you may need to involve your board of trustees or management committee or seek HR advice.

Colleagues at your local CVC may also be able to provide some guidance if things go wrong.

Further information

Our information sheet [How to Ensure Volunteer Satisfaction](#) gives an overview of the issues that contribute to volunteer satisfaction and what your organisation can do to create a positive volunteer experience.

Our free e-learning course [Management and Support for volunteers](#) provides some top tips for managing volunteers.

You can find information on policies and procedures in our [Running your organisation section](#).

Improving your practice – Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.

If you want to assess the quality of your volunteer management and involvement, prove and improve the effectiveness of your work with volunteers, and enhance your organisation's reputation, then Investing in Volunteers provides the ideal framework.

Achieving the standard shows your volunteers – and potential volunteers – how much they are valued and gives them confidence in your ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience.

To download a free copy of the Investing in Volunteers framework, or learn more about how to achieve the quality mark visit [the website](#).