

# Compact codes of practice

## Volunteering

### Definition of volunteering

'An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.'

National Compact Volunteering Code of Good Practice 2005

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## 1 Introduction

- 1a The Compact for Leeds, launched in September 2003, sets out, for the first time, the responsibilities and expectations of the Leeds Initiative's public-sector partners and the voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector have when working together.
- 1b Leeds is a city with many cultures, languages, races and faiths. The Compact for Leeds recognises, celebrates and values these differences and aims to include all groups that find themselves under-represented and excluded.
- 1c This code of practice is one of four which support the Compact for Leeds. The others cover:
- encouraging people to use funding effectively;
  - communications and consultation; and
  - promoting equal partnerships.
- 1d This code of practice refers to the work with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCF). The Compact for Leeds recognises the many functions of the faith sector and fully supports and promotes the community activity carried out by faith groups and organisations. However, the Compact for Leeds cannot support activity that leads to the promotion of any particular faith.
- 1e Across Leeds there is a very wide-ranging VCF sector that plays an important role in the city. Their activities range from:
- developing the confidence of people and communities to influence and take part in local decision-making by supporting them to work together, encouraging volunteering and to become more involved;
  - providing services to the public and particular groups in the community, meeting social and individual needs;
  - supporting communities and the individuals they represent, for example, through campaigning or through formal representation in decision-making forums;
  - contributing expertise and experience when developing policy;
  - providing jobs and income; and
  - delivering public and publicly-funded services.

## 2 The aim of this code of practice

- 2a This code of practice offers good-practice guidance, but is not a guide for managing volunteers. And, it does not replace volunteering policies that you may have in your organisation. We have

developed it to make sure that organisations which have signed up to the Compact for Leeds work with volunteers in a consistent way.

2b This code of practice aims to have a positive effect on the way volunteers are involved in organisations. We have put it together to help you understand what support and training volunteers might need and you might recruit volunteers and, most importantly, keep them.

2c The code identifies three areas:

- your responsibilities;
- volunteer expectations; and
- volunteer responsibilities.

### 3 Why involve volunteers?

3a Volunteers can do almost anything. In many different settings and circumstances around Leeds there are volunteer advice workers, 'befrienders', counsellors, drivers, dog walkers, gardeners, lawyers, librarians, shoppers, committee members - the list goes on and on.

3b There are many good reasons for involving volunteers. Some services rely on the very special nature of voluntary work, for example, befriending, where it is important that the volunteer is not a paid professional, but someone who has chosen the role. Other organisations are run entirely by volunteers, or have a small number of paid staff.

3c Volunteers bring a fresh approach to the work they do. They often bring credibility to an organisation - giving their time for free suggests that the work must be of value. Volunteers are often in a unique position that allows them to speak out on issues of concern where perhaps paid staff can't.

3d Remember that volunteering should be a two-way process. Not only does the volunteer contribute to the work of your organisation, but they should have the opportunity to get something in return. This could be meeting new people, learning new skills, gaining a sense of satisfaction from the role they have chosen and feeling valued for their contribution.

35 We cannot underestimate the importance of a positive volunteering experience. For some people, volunteering may be the first important step into, or returning to, work and learning opportunities. It also provides an important opportunity to build a CV and gain a useful reference.

#### **4 Agencies contracting for and funding services that use volunteers**

- 4a The 'added value' of volunteer labour should be acknowledged and appreciated. However, you need to carefully consider needs when buying services that are delivered by volunteers. You should be aware of and understand issues including costs, the difficulties of managing volunteers and the risks associated with using volunteers.
- 4b You should not expect or make funding dependent on using volunteer labour or expertise when contracting for services.
- 4c Agencies which contract for organisations to deliver services by using volunteers need to be sure that the organisation is following best practice in all aspects of managing those volunteers.
- 4d If you are using volunteers, you have the right to expect agencies contracting for them to cover the costs needed to manage the volunteers who are delivering the services.
- 4e Agencies which contract for services or funding activities that depend on volunteers must take responsibility for making sure that the appropriate arrangements are in place to support the volunteers. Support could include, for example, financial help and help with administration, offering goods in kind or by providing support to development.

#### **5 Organisational responsibilities**

As an organisation signed up to the compact, it is your responsibility to:

- make sure that volunteering is rewarding for all;
- have a structure that supports volunteers, for example, a volunteering policy;
- promote and share a common understanding of the value of volunteering at every level within your organisation;
- have a duty of care for your volunteers;
- take appropriate action to reduce the risks to people supported by volunteers, for example, by using criminal record checks;
- make sure that all activities meet with current laws and employment policies;
- remember to cost all of the above appropriately when raising your volunteering budget, for example, to cover expenses such as training;
- make sure that equal opportunities influence your organisational practice;
- reduce barriers which may prevent people from volunteering in your organisation;
- provide training for new volunteers and ongoing training for all volunteers appropriate to their volunteering role;
- provide ongoing support, supervision and, where appropriate, review the work of your volunteers from time to time;

- aim to have a team of volunteers which reflects the local community it works with;
- be sensitive to the needs of volunteers and, where possible, aim to meet those needs;
- offer volunteers guidance and guidance to more appropriate opportunities, where necessary;
- promote opportunities for volunteers to fully develop their potential;
- make links with local volunteer networks to share good practice and make sure up-to-date information on volunteering is available;
- continually monitor and assess the above, including your volunteers in the process; and
- celebrate and value your volunteers - remember to do something nice for them occasionally.

## 6 Volunteer expectations

A volunteer, in an organisation signed up to the Compact for Leeds, can expect to:

- receive clear information about their tasks and responsibilities;
- have a named person or people to work with them from the organisation to give them relevant training and regular support and supervision;
- know that any information they share with your organisation is confidential;
- be treated fairly in an environment which does not accept discrimination and which is sensitive to, and aims to meet the needs of, volunteers;
- be protected and covered by insurance while volunteering;
- have access to training and skills which is appropriate to the tasks involved;
- not be used as a replacement for a paid worker;
- not have unfair demands made on their time;
- have their principles or beliefs taken into account;
- be paid for their out-of-pocket expenses while volunteering;
- be given the opportunity to influence what happens in the organisation; and
- be free to express their (positive or negative) feedback about your organisation and feel confident that this will be acted on.

## 7 Volunteer responsibilities

A volunteer has the responsibility to:

- understand the need for support and guidance;
- be willing to have training appropriate to their volunteering role;
- accept your organisation's principles and aims;
- be familiar with and follow your policies and practice;
- do what is reasonably asked of them, to the best of their ability;
- treat information about service users, workers or other volunteers in a confidential way;
- tell an appropriate person if they are worried about any part of your organisation's work;

- recognise that they are representatives of the organisation and must act in an appropriate way while they are volunteering; and
- honour any commitment to the organisation and let the appropriate person know as soon as possible if they cannot fulfil that commitment.

For more information contact the following organisations.

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