

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

As an organisation signed up to the Leeds Compact it is your responsibility to:

- make sure that volunteering is rewarding for all;
- promote the value of volunteering at every level within your organisation;
- create and put into practice policies which aim to protect everyone in the organisation and make sure that these are understood and upheld by all;
- support volunteering from outside and within the organisation;
- celebrate and value your volunteers - remember to do something nice for them occasionally;
- provide appropriate training for all volunteers, depending on their role;
- provide ongoing support, supervision and, where appropriate, review your volunteers' work from time to time;
- make sure that equal opportunities influence what your organisation does;
- aim to have a volunteer team which reflects the local community it works with;
- reduce barriers which may prevent people from volunteering within your organisation;
- be sensitive to the needs of volunteers and, where possible, aim to meet those needs;
- offer volunteers guidance to find other opportunities, if their skills are not suited to your organisation;
- promote opportunities for volunteers to fully develop their potential;
- take appropriate action to reduce risks to people who are supported by volunteers, for example, by using criminal-record checks;
- make links with local volunteer networks to share good practice and make sure up-to-date information on volunteering is available;
- remember to cost all of the above appropriately when raising your volunteering budget; and
- continually monitor and assess the above, including your volunteers in the process.



Your volunteers can expect to:

- receive clear information about their tasks and responsibilities in your organisation;
- have a named person or people to work with them from the organisation to give them appropriate 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 developing skills which are appropriate to the tasks involved;
- not be used as a replacement for a paid worker;
- not have unfair demands made on their time;
- not be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs;
- be paid for all their out-of-pocket expenses while volunteering;
- be given the opportunity to play a part in decision-making within your organisation; and
- be free to give their feedback (positive or negative) about your organisation and feel confident that this will be acted on.

Your volunteers have the responsibility to:

- accept your principles and aims;
- understand the need for support and guidance;
- be familiar with and work within 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 work;
- recognise that they are representatives of the organisation and must act in an appropriate way while they are volunteering;
- honour any commitment to the organisation and let the appropriate person know as soon as possible if they are cannot fulfil that commitment;
- be willing to have training appropriate to their role; and
- have fun.

Remember

If you contract for or fund services that use volunteers, you need to consider carefully when buying services delivered by volunteers. Issues to look at include costs, how complicated it can be to manage volunteers and the risks associated with using volunteers.

For more information contact the following organisations:

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