



Working With Volunteers

Good Practice Guidelines



**KEEP
CALM
AND
MANAGE
VOLUNTEERS**

Gail Anderson—Chief Executive



Volunteering in Orkney is not considered by those engaged in it as something extra or unusual. Drawing on strong cultural traditions, voluntary activity is rooted in our communities. The benefits to individuals and those they support are both immediate and long lasting—our local charities, community groups and increasingly social enterprises simply could not operate without volunteers. We at VAO value greatly those individuals who devote time, energy and skills to helping others and it is important that their contribution is supported, developed and recognised. This booklet is designed to provide good practice information to organisations that rely on volunteers to manage or deliver their services and activities. The commitment of individuals should not be taken for granted and the implementation of the guidance in this booklet will ensure that volunteers, organisations and those benefiting from their work will have a positive and enjoyable experience

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Introduction

As we all know, volunteers contribute enormously to the work of voluntary organisations; in some cases they are vital to the delivery of services. They are involved in a wide variety of roles: as management committee members, administrators, fundraisers and others (too many to list), which will be defined by the aims and objectives of the organisation they volunteer for.

People volunteer for different reasons...it depends on what they are looking for from the experience and what, if anything, they hope to gain. Each volunteer brings particular skills, experience and needs to their role, and in return for their commitment of time and energy they are entitled to expect a safe and supportive volunteering environment.

Effective planning for volunteer involvement will ensure a productive and enjoyable experience for the volunteer and for the organisation.

Voluntary Action Orkney has compiled this booklet to help your organisation plan, implement or revise volunteering policies.

For more information, support or training to help you develop any of the policies described in the booklet please contact VAO. Contact details are at the back of this booklet, and staff will be pleased to help!



What Are the Benefits to Your Organisation?

Why should your organisation go to the trouble of implementing volunteering policies and procedures?

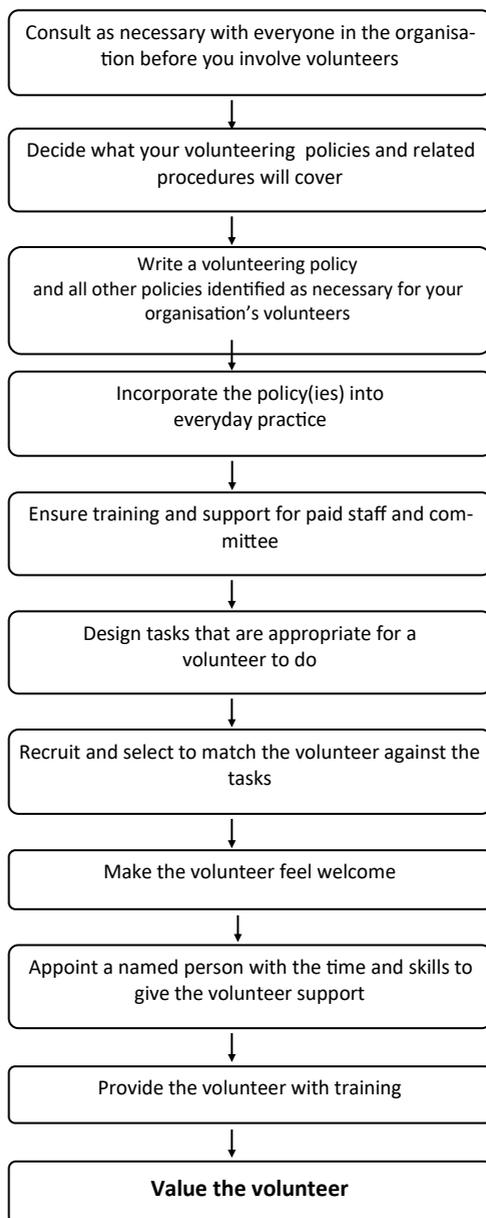
Volunteers are often an organisation's most valuable resource. In order to protect that resource and use it effectively everyone within an organisation should be committed to:

- the involvement of volunteers;
- defining why volunteers are needed and what they will do;
- operating a fair and transparent recruitment procedure;
- provision of support, training and development;
- provision of a safe and secure working environment;
- recognition of each volunteer's contribution and achievements.

The benefits of adopting a planned approach to the use of volunteers are:

- You will find it easier to recruit volunteers if you can demonstrate a professional approach to their management;
- You will be able to retain volunteers if they feel supported and valued;
- Well trained, supported and happy volunteers will ensure the delivery of a good quality service
- It will enhance the reputation of your organisation;
- You will be able to respond positively to funders' requests for evidence that you support volunteers;
- You will in many instances be complying with legal requirements.

Key Stages in Involving Volunteers*



The Volunteering Policy

A volunteering policy should be a statement of intent by your organisation, therefore the organisation should (re) clarify its own aims and values and look at how volunteering fits into those aims.

It is vitally important that everyone in the organisation: volunteers, paid staff, management committee etc., is involved in the process.

A volunteer policy:

- Is a written statement of the aims and values of your organisation and of the role that volunteers have in it;
- Deals with what your organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers can expect of your organisation;
- Outlines the principles upon which volunteers are involved in your organisation;
- Defines the roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and your organisation;
- Includes a code of practice governing the relationship of volunteers with your organisation.

What should be in the Policy?

There is no set format for a volunteering policy and each organisation has its own unique needs that should be reflected in its policy. It should, however, include at least some of the following:

- An explanation of what the organisation does and why it involves volunteers in its work

What should be in the Policy?

Contd.

- Recruitment and selection;
- Induction and Training;
- Support and supervision;
- Communication;
- Insurance;
- Out-of-pocket expenses;
- Equal opportunities;
- Health and safety;
- Grievance, disciplinary and complaints procedures;
- Confidentiality;
- Involvement of volunteers in consultation and decision making processes;
- References for volunteers;
- Holidays and other breaks;
- Recognition and reward;
- Monitoring and evaluation.

There will be others specific to the work of your organisation e.g. child protection, PVG membership (if the volunteer is carrying out 'regulated Work' as part of their normal duties), procedures to support volunteers with additional support needs, and so on.

To keep the volunteering policy as accessible as possible, it may be preferable to mention in brief the procedures/policies that your organisation decides are appropriate. You could provide separate copies of all the policies mentioned, perhaps by creating a volunteers' handbook. The policies need not be complex or lengthy, in fact it is preferable that they are simple and easily understood.

Other Necessary Policies

Recruitment and Selection

Before you consider the recruitment of volunteers, you should consult with everyone in your organisation and agree why you need volunteers and what they will do. It should then be relatively simple to draw up a

Task Description for each volunteer role, which should include:

- A description of what the volunteer will do;
- The skills they will need to do it;
- When and where the volunteer is required;
- Who the volunteer will work with;
- Who will support the volunteer and how they will do it.

Once these have been discussed and decided then you will know *why* you are recruiting and both you and the volunteer will be clear about what they will be expected to do.

Some points that are worth considering when drawing up a recruitment and selection policy:

- How will you advertise for volunteers?
- Will you use application forms?
- How will you interview volunteers?
- What selection process will you use?
- Will you need references?
- How will you deal with people you think are not right for the particular volunteer role they are interested in?
- If your organisation works with vulnerable clients, what procedures do you have in place to protect both them and your volunteers?

Bear in mind that your procedure should be fair and transparent and should comply with equal opportunities legislation. VAO can help you in drawing up and pulling together these Policies.

Induction and Training

Welcoming a new volunteer into your organisation is one of the most important stages in a volunteers journey, but sadly it is often one that is scrimped on, hurried through, or even over looked altogether!

Decide how you will welcome new volunteers and give them all the information and skills they need to be able to take up their duties and contribute to the work of the organisation. You will reap the rewards of doing this stage properly.

You may wish to specify a **trial period** during which the organisation and the volunteer can discover whether or not he/she is comfortable in and/or suitable for their role.

You may wish to draw up a **volunteer agreement** in order to clarify the rights and roles of the volunteer and the organisation. The agreement should be signed by the volunteer and a representative of the organisation.

The training needs of the volunteer should be identified at recruitment and during induction so that an appropriate training programme can be devised. However, due to new or changing responsibilities or projects, the demands of funders and the introduction of new legislation, training needs can arise throughout the duration of the volunteer's placement. Measures should be put in place to identify and meet those needs.

Support and Supervision

The amount and type of support and supervision that a volunteer will need will vary according to the activities of the organisation and the volunteer's role. For example a volunteer working in a charity shop with colleagues close by will not need the same type of support as a volunteer befriender. It is important that each volunteer should know the name of the person to whom they should report. That person should provide regular support and supervision as required by the volunteer's role and defined by the organisation.

Communication

Effective communication is central to all productive relationships, therefore careful thought should be given to how the organisation will keep volunteers informed. Although it is essential to keep volunteers up to date on matters that impact on their work, it is also important to keep them up to date with wider issues that might affect the organisation as a whole. How and how often you communicate with your volunteers is key to making them feel part of your organisation!

Insurance

Whilst your organisation's aim should be to minimise risk of harm to all volunteers (see page 14 Health and Safety) you do have a legal and moral duty to ensure that proper insurance cover, which is appropriate for the activities carried out by your organisation, is in place.

Types of insurance include:

- *Employer's liability*—all organisations with paid staff must have this type of insurance and the certificate should be prominently displayed. It is best practice to extend this to cover volunteers;
- *Public liability*—covers injury, loss or damage caused to any person as a result of the organisation's negligence;
- *Personal accident*—covers personal injury to staff or volunteers whilst they are engaged in work on behalf of the organisation;
- *Motor Vehicle Insurance*—vehicles owned by the organisation must have this insurance. Drivers using their own vehicles on behalf of the organisation must check with their insurance company that their insurance is adequate.

Out of Pocket Expenses

The payment of expenses can be extremely important to volunteers and is also important in helping to attract a diverse volunteer workforce. By reimbursing expenses you will make volunteering accessible to **everyone** who has the interest and skills (see equal opportunities below) to make a contribution to your organisation.

It is essential to decide and to explain to volunteers what will be reimbursed, e.g.. travel, meals, child care etc. and what the arrangements are for claiming expenses. It is important not to pay a flat rate but to reimburse **actual** expenses. Best practice is to pay out against an expenses claim form authorised by a supervisor, and accompanied by receipts .

Many funding bodies are keen to include in an award, money for volunteer allowances to enable equal involvement and participation.

Equal Opportunities

The principles of equal opportunities should be reflected in all your organisational policies. Recruitment, access to training, payment of expenses and communication methods are just a few.

The objective of equal opportunities is to enable participation, diversity and wider access to your organisation's activities and is not confined to volunteers but should encompass the wider work of your organisation.

Volunteers must be given clear guidelines about their role in respect of the organisation's equal opportunities policy and training should be provided as required. If a volunteer is found to have behaved in a discriminatory manner the organisation will be held responsible.

Increasingly, funders are asking for a commitment to equal opportunities and often will request a copy of an organisation's equal opportunities policy. Again VAO can help draw up this policy.

Health and Safety

An organisation can be held legally liable if it does not exercise a duty of care for all its volunteers, clients and members of the public. Every individual also has a duty of care.

At induction, all volunteers should be made aware of the organisation's health and safety policy and practical safety issues relating to their particular role; eg First Aid or Manual Handling etc... On-going training should be provided as necessary. You should also not forget about Fire evacuation, exit routes and assembly points when dealing with Health and safety.

Volunteer Problem Solving

With volunteers, it is best practise not to use terms like grievance, disciplinary etc... In most cases and using the appropriate support mechanisms the organisation should be able to resolve any difficulties. However, to protect all concerned it is important to have procedures in place. These should include methods of dealing with:

- Complaints made by or about volunteers;
- Inappropriate behaviour;
- Breach of agreed procedures, e.g.. confidentiality.

It is preferable to have separate procedures from those for paid staff, to ensure that the procedures are understandable and to keep a distinction between paid and volunteer staff.

Confidentiality

Organisations need to consider the confidentiality of information relating to their volunteers and service users. Therefore, volunteers should be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff. The organisation should include guidelines on the storage of and access to personal information and ensure that all information that is out of date, or no longer relevant, is destroyed.

Recognition and Reward

Underpinning all the work of preparing for volunteers, agreeing why you need them, defining their role and putting in place support mechanisms, there should be an understanding that volunteering is a two-way relationship between your organisation and the volunteer.

There are many ways in which the contribution of volunteers can be recognised and the creation and implementation of a volunteering policy, along with the policies outlined in this booklet, will demonstrate how much your organisation values volunteers. Other methods include:

- Involvement in decisions relating to their role and the work of the organisation;
- Inclusion in staff discussions and the addition of their names to the published list of staff;
- Provision of references;
- Keeping a record of their activities and of completed training;
- Providing a lunch, awarding certificates or any other activity that will celebrate their involvement, perhaps during Volunteers' Week;
- As simple as saying 'thank you'!

Monitoring and Evaluation



Those of us who work in the voluntary sector are aware that change is constant, so it is a good idea to regularly, perhaps annually, review your policies and procedures and adapt or improve them as necessary. It is useful to include staff and volunteers in the review and even if very little is changed the process of looking through your policies will remind everyone within the organisation of their importance.

It is a good idea to have annual reviews for your volunteers, to discuss the previous year, highlight any problems/training needs and plan for the coming year.

Training in Volunteer Management

Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO) offers courses specifically designed for voluntary sector staff and volunteers. For example:

Learning Opportunities for Volunteer Managers

- Planning for Volunteer Involvement
- Effective Recruitment of Volunteers
- Selecting and Interviewing Volunteers
- An Introduction to Training Volunteers
- An Introduction to Support and Supervision
- PVG training
- The importance of proper and structured Volunteer Induction

These short courses have been developed by VAO staff and are delivered locally. They are particularly useful for those new to their role or those who wish to update their skills. More information can be found on: www.vaorkney.org.uk, our facebook page or by contacting Robert.McGregor@vaorkney.org.uk / 01856 872897.



Voluntary Action Orkney also delivers the 'Quality Volunteering Award'. Quality Volunteering is a quality standard for all organisations who involve volunteers in their work. This quality standard enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management, policies and procedures and once awarded, allows them to publicly demonstrate their commitment to volunteering and volunteer management.

This Standard will be managed locally by Voluntary Action Orkney, and Organisations are supported fully while working towards achieving the Award. For more information, please contact Rob McGregor

Useful Websites

Orkney Communities

www.orkneycommunities.co.uk

PVG

<http://www.mygov.scot/about-disclosure-scotland/>

Data Protection

<https://www.dataprotectionadviser.co.uk>

Equal Opportunities

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

Discrimination

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland/discrimination_s.htm
www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/odf

Voluntary Sector

www.vaorkney.org.uk

www.scvo.org.uk

National/Local Government

www.gov.scot

www.orkney.gov.uk

Health and Safety

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>

www.hse.gov.uk

Saltire Volunteering Website

www.saltireawards.org.uk





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For more information about anything in
this booklet, please contact Rob
McGregor at VAO.



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