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*This document is a guide for what to include in your organisation’s Volunteer Handbook. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Centre team on* *volunteering@ehcvs.org..uk*

**As well as the Volunteer Handbook, you should ensure every volunteer has a copy of their role description.**

# Volunteer Handbook

1. Introduction from the Chief Executive or another senior member of staff – this shows organisational commitment to the involvement of volunteers.
2. Organisational mission statement - this is a paragraph which defines an organisation’s reason for existence. It embodies its goals, philosophies and intended activities essential to the identity of the organisation. A mission statement clarifies the purpose of the organisation to promote focus and helps to create a clear identity within the community.
3. Organisational chart – either showing all staff or, if a large organisation, departments – this should clearly show how things are organised and/or who is responsible for what aspects of the organisation’s mission.
4. Contact information for the Volunteer Co-ordinator or whoever will be supervising the volunteer – this will ensure volunteers know who to contact with any queries or to give the organisation information.
5. A building plan - depending on the size of your organisation it may be necessary to provide each volunteer with a map of your building and surrounding area. During the volunteer’s induction you should also give a personal tour to familiarise the volunteer and make them feel at home. Be sure to identify places where the volunteer will do their volunteering, where their supervisor may be, where they can take breaks and where the toilets are!
6. Hours of operation - indicate here when your organisation is open to the public or when normal working hours are. Be clear as to whether this is the time during which volunteers will be required or if they will be performing their duties at other times.
7. Emergency procedures, health & safety policy and insurance - including emergency procedures can set a new volunteer’s mind at ease, prevent injury and ease liability on your organisation. What is your organisation’s protocol in the case of an emergency? Your building plan can include locations of emergency exits and first aid kits. Your organisational chart can include contact people who would be in charge should an emergency situation occur. Volunteers should be made aware of your organisation’s health & safety policy and you should also provide volunteers with a brief statement to describe what insurance coverage is in place to protect them.
8. Mutual expectations – it is good to lay out, perhaps in table format, what your organisation expects from the volunteer and what the volunteer can expect from the organisation. Some organisations use Volunteer Agreements, but they can be worded in language that comes across as a contract of employment. A table that shows expectations should be clear – but it is informal.
9. **Information about training, support and supervision** – it is good practice to provide adequate, relevant training and support to ensure volunteers have, or are able to develop, the necessary skills to enable them to carry out their role and complete tasks they have agreed to perform. Tell them in the handbook what you offer.
10. **Information about expenses** – let volunteers know about your process to enable them to claim out-of-pocket expenses. As a minimum, it is good practice to offer to refund travel and the cost of any meal they might have if their volunteering takes place over a usual meal period.
11. **Communication with volunteers** - does your organisation have a formalised way of communicating with your volunteers about the activities of the organisation? Tell your volunteers how you will keep them involved and informed. Some organisations offer monthly/quarterly newsletters that keep people up to speed on what’s happening. Other groups hold meetings and informal gatherings to create networks and share information. Depending on the size of your operation it may be sufficient to simply schedule meetings for volunteers with their co-ordinator/supervisor. Websites or Intranets can be utilised as a forum for posting news.
12. **Problem solving procedure** - what is your organisation’s process for dealing with complaints or concerns about or from volunteers? Provide your volunteers with a clear, written process for handling these situations properly – it should not be the same as the Grievance and Disciplinary Process that applies to paid staff.
13. **Other policies** – your organisation will probably have a range of policies e.g. Equal Opportunities, which you want volunteers to know about. Include information in the handbook about what those policies are and how a volunteer can access them.
14. Information about using equipment and IT – do you allow volunteers to look at personal websites, e.g. Facebook during the time they are volunteering, or would you prefer they don’t? If so, say so. Also, it would be helpful to include information about how the can login to computer networks and any codes they may need to know to print of photocopy.
15. Confidentiality and data protection, including GDPR legislation - it is important for volunteers to understand confidentiality requirement at your organisation and you may have a confidentiality agreement that you ask all volunteers to sign. Additionally, they should know how you implement the Data Protection Act and how you will keep their information safe and secure whilst they are volunteering with you and for how long you will keep it if/when they leave.
16. Information about what will happen if/when they leave – it is good practice to tell the volunteers about exit interviews and whether you will offer them a reference and any criteria they have to meet to get a reference.