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Fact sheet 4a: Volunteer inductions

On the first day a volunteer begins their new role with an organisation, they should be given an induction to orient them to the necessary information they need to know. A good induction ensures volunteers are able to contribute quickly and feel part of the organisation.

Induction incorporates orientation, personal introductions, understanding the volunteering role, knowing where to find things and understanding the values and policies of the organisation. It should not consist of 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.

**Planning a volunteer induction**

Different roles might require different types of induction. For example, some roles might require individuals to sign a confidentiality agreement (such as administrative and office assistants), or intellectual property agreement (such as a blogger or poster designer). Some roles might involve being shown safe manual handling processes; for others, it won’t be relevant. Whilst induction and training for roles is likely to vary in form and content, there will be common aspects to all inductions, such as signing a volunteer agreement and going over organisational procedures and policies. Larger organisations might decide to carry out inductions for two or more volunteers at once, which can be more time efficient.

**Short term and micro volunteering roles (eg events or event shifts)**

Despite the short term nature of the volunteering, it is still advisable to provide an induction. Depending on the nature of the volunteering, it might be appropriate to invite volunteers to attend a separate induction session, in which key elements such as risk assessments, health and safety information, who’s who and other important information can be provided.

**Volunteers with learning difficulties or disabilities**

Don’t simply disregard the induction process. Rather, consider what the new volunteer can take on board concerning their role and the organisation. It is good practice to create an accessible version of key paperwork such as the volunteer handbook and volunteer agreement. Mencap provide a very helpful best practice guide: ‘[Am I Making Myself Clear? - Guidelines for Accessible Writing](http://www.accessibleinfo.co.uk/pdfs/Making-Myself-Clear.pdf)’

**Induction programme structure**

Below is a suggested four-part process that can be amended to suit the needs of your organisation. It can be combined with our [sample volunteer induction](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-management) programme, which can be used as a basis for your own.

Bear in mind that volunteers will benefit from breaks from information-heavy aspects of the induction. Break up denser aspects with, for example, a tour of the premises, meeting key staff and refreshment breaks.

**Induction component 1: Volunteer welcome and orientation**

The first thing you should do is warmly welcome your volunteer and make them feel comfortable. Explain who will manage the volunteer, and who they can go to if they have questions or problems. Introduce the induction checklist and explain how it is used. In order to help you with this aspect, you can download the [sample volunteer welcome letter](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-management). At the outset it is useful to address some key aspects, such as:

* The volunteer role and responsibilities –making sure the volunteer is clear on what is being asked of them (see [guidance on creating role descriptions](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-recruitment) )
* Volunteer agreement (see [guidance and sample agreements](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-policy-handbook-and-agreement))
* Depending on the role: confidentiality and data protection agreement, intellectual copyright agreement (see [guidance and templates](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteering-and-law))
* Shift breaks, lunch times, any food vouchers
* Claiming expenses
* Organisation policy on personal telephone use and internet access.

**Induction component 2: Premises**

These aspects provide a practical orientation for volunteers so they feel more comfortable within the premises. You could:

* Show them around the premises, including where they will be volunteering
* Introduce them to staff and other volunteers, particularly if they will be shadowing someone
* Show them the location of facilities, eg kitchen, toilets, parking, bike racks, printers etc.

**Induction component 3: Induction information and administration**

This section comprises denser content. It is useful to cover by going through a handbook or pack together, which the volunteer is able to keep for reference. When you move onto these formal matters, ensure volunteers understand the issues by going through policies and procedures with them. Once you have covered the points in step 2, volunteers should feel more confident about asking you to explain anything they do not fully understand. This step of the induction could include:

* The history, ethos and structure of the organisation
* Your organisation’s policies and procedures, eg equality of opportunity, health and safety, risk assessments. For information on creating a volunteer policy, see our guide [Volunteer policy, Handbook and Agreement](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-policy-handbook-and-agreement). For information on creating risk assessments see [Fact Sheet 2d on Health and Safety](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteering-and-law)
* How to deal with complaints and areas of concern
* The organisation’s internal and external channels of communication, e.g. volunteer newsletter, e-bulletins, volunteer notice board.

**Induction component 4:**

This component covers common aspects of introducing a volunteer to their role. There are induction tasks relating to practical roles and office-based roles, so not all will be relevant to most volunteers.

**Post induction questionnaire**

Once the volunteer has completed all aspects of his/her induction, this questionnaire can be used to help the volunteer evaluate his/her experience and identify any issues or knowledge gaps. This can then form the basis of the first supervision review between the volunteer and her/ his line manager. Download our [sample post induction questionnaire for volunteers](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteer-management)

**For more information**

[National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)

NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering across Britain by connecting, representing and supporting voluntary organisations. It has a reputation as an authoritative voice for the sector.

* [www.ncvo.org.uk](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/) Phone: 020 7713 6161 Email: ncvo@ncvo.org.uk

NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit

Knowledge and e-learning for charities, social enterprises and community groups. Learn from experts and peers, and share your experiences.

* [www.knowhownonprofit.org](https://knowhownonprofit.org/)

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