**Fact sheet 3a:**

**Volunteer Policy: the backbone of your volunteering programme**

**What is it?**

Your volunteer policy is the framework that captures all aspects of your organisation’s volunteer programme. It explains why your organisation involves volunteers, how they are involved, and how you will ensure safe, equal and fair practices.

**Who is it for?**

A volunteer policy is written for the entire organisation, so that everyone understands how and why volunteers are involved. It is wise to create a volunteer policy at the start of planning for volunteer involvement – no matter how many (or few) volunteers you intend to involve. Your volunteer programme might grow in the future, and the better planned the programme is, the easier expansion and development will be for everyone involved.

Your volunteer policy enables everyone to understand how volunteers should be treated, and what needs to be in place so they can carry out their role. It should act as the guidance for everyone in the organisation for how volunteers should behave and how they should be treated. It explains the terms of the relationship between your organisation and volunteers: what you expect from them, and what they can expect from you. A volunteer policy means a better and more consistent volunteer experience.

**Organisational policies**

Your volunteers should also be covered and bound by the policies and procedures that your organisation has in place to protect staff, clients and organisation interests. These include:

* Equality of opportunity
* Health and safety
* Insurance
* Safeguarding
* Confidentiality
* Problem solving

If you need information or support with organisational policies, please refer to the ‘Organisations and Groups’ section of [Warwickshire CAVA’s resource library](http://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library) or contact your [local Warwickshire CAVA office](http://www.wcava.org.uk/contact).

How to structure your volunteer policy

We recommend that you take time to read this guide at the outset of planning for volunteer involvement. Then, as your thinking and planning becomes more concrete, you can address the relevant pieces of the volunteer policy that relate to the procedures for recruiting and managing volunteers. This means that your policy does not become an afterthought – by developing it in draft form as you go, you will ensure that any subsequent planning and development rests on its principles.

Your volunteer policy should feature the following:

* The relationship between your organisation and volunteers
* Recruitment – method and commitment to equal opportunities, if applicable
* Inductions and ongoing support – how you will support volunteers
* Expenses – under which circumstances and how much volunteers can claim
* The procedure for dealing with problems
* Health and safety, insurance, etc.

The following is a good practice example of the kind of content included in a volunteer policy. Statements in italics are examples of wording, which you can amend to reflect your organisation’s values, aims and needs.

Introduction

The first section should be about your organisation; what your aims are and why you intend to involve volunteers. It should include:

* Organisation name
* Mission statement
* Aims and objectives
* A statement explaining why you wish to involve volunteers, such as:

AnyOrg seeks to involve volunteers to:

* Ensure our services meet the needs of our clients;
* Provide new skills and perspectives;
* Increase our contact with the local community we serve.

**Principles and values**

Your policy should state the values you have in regard to involving volunteers, explaining how their work will be valued in line with your organisation’s work. This section should show how your organisation values:

* Volunteers’ contributions to your organisations’ aims and objectives
* Volunteers as part of your organisation’s team. It might state that the work volunteers do is complementary to that of your paid staff, or may state that volunteers are not involved as a way to replace staff
* The mutual benefit that volunteering has for volunteers and customers/clients
* Equality of opportunity and diversity.

**Example policy wording:**

This volunteering policy is underpinned by the following principles:

1. AnyOrg will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to AnyOrg’s work;
2. AnyOrg does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff but instead to complement their work and extend our services;
3. AnyOrg expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will activity seek to involve them in their work;
4. AnyOrg recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively;
5. AnyOrg is proud of our commitment to equal opportunities and seeks to create a diverse and inclusive working environment for staff and volunteers.

**Good practice guidelines**

The following policy guidelines address the practical aspects of involving volunteers. These should be reflected in your volunteer handbook and/or good practice guide.

**1. Preparing for volunteers**

Before you involve volunteers, you should have the following in place:

* Role descriptions
* Risk assessments for each role
* Policy on expenses – what expenses can be claimed and how
* Provision of equipment and resources
* Support, supervision and volunteer management
* Insurance protection.

More information on these are covered in our other guides in [Warwickshire CAVA’s resource library](http://www.wcava.org.uk/volunteering/resource-library).

Example policy wording:

Before involving volunteers in any role, AnyOrg will ensure that the following are in place to ensure their safety and efficiency:

1. All volunteers will be provided with a written role description that explains the role purpose and main duties/responsibilities;
2. AnyOrg will reimburse volunteers for travel expenses from home to the place of volunteering. Volunteers are required to keep receipts where applicable and fill in an expenses claim form;
3. AnyOrg will ensure that volunteers have access to the necessary equipment to carry out their duties/tasks, including personal protection equipment (PPE) if appropriate;
4. The Volunteer Manager is responsible for the management of volunteers. She/he will ensure that volunteers are properly inducted into AnyOrg and have access to this policy and other relevant policies and handbooks. The Volunteer Manager (or a staff member identified by them) will conduct regular support or supervision reviews with volunteers to ensure good performance and opportunities for personal development;
5. AnyOrg has public liability insurance that protects volunteers whilst in their voluntary role. For specific details, including information about using personal vehicles, please see AnyOrg’s Employee Handbook.

2. Involving volunteers: recruitment and selection process

In the above sections you have explained how you will involve volunteers to benefit the work of your organisation. Your recruitment and selection process should reflect your wish to do this. Although volunteer recruitment is not as competitive as staff recruitment, you should approach the task with the aim of involving volunteers that will support your organisation.

The process of recruitment and selection of volunteers can be informal but should still involve a set out and agreed procedure. It could include:

* Role description
* Advertisement and promotion
* Expression of interest or application form
* Interview (formal or informal)
* Reference checks
* DBS checks
* Saying no and referring/ signposting on.

For a comprehensive guide to volunteer recruitment and selection, see our guide Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, available in [Warwickshire CAVA’s resource library](http://www.wcava.org.uk/volunteering/resource-library).

Example policy wording:

Our recruitment and selection process will include the following steps:

1. Role descriptions

AnyOrg will create clear role descriptions for each volunteer opportunity. These will be available to ensure that potential volunteers, staff and the organisation as a whole are clear on the purpose of the role, this will also provide a basis for support and supervision as it outlines the volunteers tasks and responsibilities.

1. Promotion

AnyOrg will ensure that all volunteer opportunities are promoted widely to increase accessibility of a diverse range of interested parties. Our recruitment will include but not be limited to online promotions through Volunteer Connect.

1. Our recruitment process will be a fair and open procedure, promoting equality of opportunity. For example:

* AnyOrg will only list the skills and requirements on a role description that are necessary for that role;
* AnyOrg will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate volunteers, for example allowing a support worker to accompany a volunteer.

1. Application form

Our promotional material will clearly explain how a volunteer can get involved. The first step for volunteers is to fill in a short application form that asks for personal contact information, why the volunteer is interested in the role and how they meet the skills criteria.

1. Interview

All volunteers identified as ‘suitable’ (from application forms) will be invited to an informal interview. It is at this stage the volunteer and AnyOrg can identify the suitability of the role to the volunteer and identify next steps (either being invited to join the team or ‘saying no’).

1. Criminal records checks

AnyOrg will carry out criminal records checks for any role that deems it necessary, for example working with children and young people, vulnerable people or sensitive data.

1. Saying no and referring volunteers on

AnyOrg recognise that volunteers are an important part of their work and service but also recognise that volunteers placed in roles not suited to their needs or interests can be detrimental to the organisation's service and to the volunteers motivation and development. If during the application and interview process a volunteer has been identified as not suitable to the role then AnyOrg will offer individuals an opportunity to identify other roles within the organisation (if available) or will refer the individual to a volunteering service, such as Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA).

3. Managing volunteers

Once you have recruited volunteers that have been ‘selected’ as suitable for your roles you must employ a continuing process to increase the likelihood of

retaining volunteers. ‘Managing volunteers’ can be an informal process but needs to be a clear and open process so volunteers know they have regular support. Having support will ensure volunteers can carry out their tasks confidently and competently, address any issues they face and any performance concerns you have. It also allows for personal and role development; keeping your volunteers interested and motivated.

Your ‘managing volunteers’ process could include:

* Induction
* Training
* Support/supervision
* Expenses Performance
* Recognition
* Dealing with problems
* Saying goodbye.

For advice on volunteer management, see our comprehensive guide Volunteer Management, available in[Warwickshire CAVA’s Resource Library](http://www.wcava.org.uk/volunteering/resource-library).

Example policy wording

AnyOrg are committed to the ongoing support of volunteers to ensure that they are able to carry out their role, the following elements are essential to ‘managing our volunteers’:

1. Induction

All volunteers will undergo a six-week induction. This induction will include:

1. The background of AnyOrg.
2. The volunteer role and how this fits into AnyOrg’s work.
3. Signed agreement of hours, responsibilities and tasks.
4. Where the volunteer will work, resources available and who they will work with.
5. Access to all relevant policies and procedures, such as health and safety, safeguarding, fire procedure, expenses, etc. See section 3.4
6. Day to day support from the Volunteer Manager or relevant identified person, this could include daily task sheets or shadowing opportunities.
7. Training

AnyOrg will ensure that any mandatory training that is required for the role is clearly explained to the volunteer during their recruitment interview. AnyOrg will provide any training essential to the role prior to the volunteer undertaking related tasks, for example minibus training, safeguarding training or manual handling. AnyOrg will give volunteers the opportunity to attend the same training that staff of AnyOrg attends (dependent on availability and suitability to role).

1. Support

The Volunteer Manager will be responsible for providing ongoing and regular support sessions. AnyOrg recognise that volunteers have different preferences and availability and so are open to this being an informal process

agreed upon between the Volunteer Manager and the individual volunteer. AnyOrg requires that volunteers have a minimum of a 20 minute informal discussion every 6 weeks to discuss their work, any concerns volunteers have and any performance concerns the Volunteer Manager has. The Volunteer Manager should keep a record of these meetings, including actions and outcomes.

1. Record keeping

The Volunteer Manager will keep an accurate file of each volunteer. Files will include the volunteers personal contact information, their application form, role description, signed agreement, record of their interview, training attended, record of all support meetings and any grievances or complaints. This file will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection act (1998).

1. Recognition

Although volunteers have chosen to give up their time to help AnyOrg, we understand that recognition of their contribution is vital in helping them to be part of the team, see the difference they make and to encourage others to volunteer. Where possibly AnyOrg will promote the contribution that volunteers make to our work, through internal newsletters, press releases and through our social media.

1. Saying goodbye

AnyOrg understands that volunteers move on for a number of reasons and so have identified steps to take to ensure a process that is smooth and beneficial to both parties. Volunteers may leave because of another opportunity, because of a grievance or because we have identified they are not suitable to our role. In any case AnyOrg will:

1. Arrange a support meeting with the Volunteer Manager (or other identified party if necessary) to establish the reasons for leaving or the issues we have;
2. If issues can be resolved we will create an action plan to follow. This may include further training and more support;
3. If the issues cannot be resolved then the volunteer may be offered an alternative role if available and appropriate;
4. If the volunteer cannot be placed elsewhere an exit interview will be carried out to explain to the volunteer why they have been asked to leave, to thank them for their time and refer on to other volunteer services such as WCAVA;
5. Volunteers will be provided with a reference.

**4. Policies and Procedures**

Your volunteers should be covered and bound by the policies and procedures that your organisation has in place to protect staff, clients and organisation interests.

This section should refer volunteers to such policies and ensure that volunteers have access to these. They should include:

* Safeguarding
* Health and safety
* Equal opportunities
* Problem solving
* Confidentiality
* Insurance.

Example policy wording:

AnyOrg recognise that volunteers are a part of our team and should be protected and bound by AnyOrg’s policies and procedures that are designed to keep all interested parties safe and ensure work is carried out to a high and consistent standard. For information about each policy please see AnyOrg’s Employee Handbook. Important policies to read include:

- Safeguarding

- Health and Safety

- Equal Opportunities

- Problem solving

- Confidentiality

- Insurance

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.

Web: [www.ncvo.org.uk](about:blank) Phone: 020 7713 6161 Email: ncvo@ncvo.org.uk

[NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit](https://knowhownonprofit.org/)

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

Web: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/>

[Investing in Volunteers (IiV)](https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/)

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.

Web: <https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/>

Phone: 020 7713 6161 Email: [ncvo@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:ncvo@ncvo.org.uk).

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