Fact/resource sheet 3c:

# The volunteer handbook: day-to-day practicalities

**What is it?**

A volunteer handbook provides volunteers with everything they need to know on a day to day basis, and in order to have a positive volunteering experience with your organisation. The larger the organisation, the more important a handbook is, in order to maintain consistency of information given to volunteers.

**Who is it for?**

The handbook is written specifically for volunteers. It helps them to settle into their role by giving them an understanding of where they fit in, what is expected of them and what they can expect from your organisation. The handbook enables volunteers to:

* Learn about your organisation and its activities
* Understand the procedures to follow and appropriate conduct
* Identify and contact key staff
* Understand policy guidelines
* Know how to address any problems.

A handbook also benefits the organisation in the following ways:

Risk management

Providing volunteers with a handbook is a good risk management strategy. Providing volunteers with information on procedures and guidelines for conduct helps to safeguard the wellbeing of service users, customers, other volunteers and staff.

Reputation

A handbook helps to communicate to new volunteers that your volunteer programme is professional, organised and reputable. A handbook can help to reassure new volunteers that their involvement has been carefully planned.

Promotion

Volunteers automatically become ambassadors for the organisation/s for which they volunteer. Make sure therefore that every volunteer understands the aims and activities of your organisation as well as any key promotional messages.

Guidelines for creating a volunteer handbook

Accessibility

As a general rule, we recommend using a font that is easy to read for individuals with dyslexia, such as Arial or Comic Sans. As well as a standard format, you might consider providing the information in a large print format, printing it on yellow paper (for individuals with dyslexia), having it translated into other commonly used languages, and/or offer help by going through it with a new volunteer. For more information on accessibility good practice visit the [Government’s website](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats).

Presentation

Ensure the handbook has your logo on it and other corporate information such as head office address, and contact details. You might wish to provide the information as a booklet, or in A4 format. Additionally, ensure it is available as a pdf and/or print version at the volunteer’s induction.

Wording

Keep the information simple and easy to digest. Avoid using jargon and technical terms. You might wish to use a more informal tone - the aim is to help volunteers to feel welcome, included and informed.

Content

Volunteer handbooks could include the following information:

1. Welcome message from the head and/or chair of the organisation
2. Introduction to the organisation including:
3. Vision and mission
4. History
5. Activities/projects.
6. Explanation of organisational structure (chart or diagram)
7. Key staff information and contact details, e.g. volunteer manager, line manager.
8. Volunteer rights and responsibilities (see p.14)
9. Procedures - guidelines for volunteers, eg:
   1. Shift times
   2. Absence procedures and holiday notice
   3. Arrival and departure procedures, e.g. signing in/out
   4. Breaks and access to refreshments
   5. Dress code
   6. Provision of equipment and resources
   7. Smoking
   8. Noticeboard
   9. First aid
   10. Fire procedure
   11. Housekeeping, eg washing and tidying up
   12. Claiming expenses
   13. Access to risk assessments for roles.
10. Summary of key points of volunteers’ policy, e.g.
11. Expenses
12. Health and safety
13. Safeguarding
14. Equality of opportunity
15. Health and wellbeing
16. Confidentiality and data protection
17. DBS checking
18. Insurance
19. Resolution of problems
20. Moving on / resignation.
21. Support of volunteers by organisation, e.g.
22. Induction
23. Line management reviews
24. Training, e.g., ‘on the job’ and in-service
25. Perks, e.g., meal vouchers, discounts on goods or services
26. Inclusion and accessibility information for volunteers with disabilities
27. Newsletter/noticeboard.
28. Volunteer recognition: events, socials etc.

For more information

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

NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering across Britain. 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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