**Fact sheet 2d. Health and Safety**

This information sheet contains the following information:

* Committing to good health and safety practice
* Health and safety policy
* Health and safety of the working environment
* Organising public events
* Working with other organisations
* Risk assessments
  + Potential risks to volunteers
  + Potential risks caused by volunteers
* Further information

Introduction

Whilst the legal requirements for organisations with paid staff and volunteers differ to those relating to volunteer-only organisations, we strongly recommend that both types follow the following advice and guidance.

Committing to good Health and Safety practice

Whilst Health and Safety legislation applies to paid staff only, organisations do have a legal duty of care towards volunteers and are under a legal obligation to protect their health and safety as members of the public. This means that reasonable steps should be taken to reduce the likelihood and seriousness of injury. It also demonstrates that volunteers are valued and the organisation cares about their health and wellbeing. [COVID 19 Health & Safety Guidance](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lclMGK1-rs9o7v1a1ZItiyROYmEHYe-r/view)

🖰 [Health & Safety at Work Act 1974](https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm)

Health and Safety policy

This is the foundation of the organisation’s approach to health and safety. Any Health and Safety policy that applies to the organisation should include and be shared with volunteers in order to demonstrate a duty of care. Whilst both volunteer-only and volunteer involving organisations with fewer than five employees are not legally obliged to have a written policy, we strongly recommend producing one.

🖰 [Health & Safety Executive (HSE) examples of model policies](https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/policy/index.htm)

Health and Safety of the working environment

The legal requirements and good practice recommendations can be summarised as following:

1. Any organisation with responsibility for buildings and premises need to make sure they comply with all relevant health and safety legislation. This applies to premises such as community centres, car parks, playgrounds and scout huts.
2. Organisations with paid staff and volunteers should ensure that:
   1. Machinery and individuals have protective equipment and that procedures for their use exist and are followed;
   2. Employers should provide employees and volunteers with adequate supervision and appropriate training so they can do their work safely
3. All employers must register their existence with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or local environmental health department. Volunteer-only organisations only need to do this if they are:
   1. Involved in dangerous activities;
   2. Involved in dangerous activities;
   3. Own, control or have responsibility for premises and buildings (in which case register with local fire authority as well);
   4. Involved in food preparation, storage or selling on five or more days in any five-week period.

Organising public events

Regardless of whether the organisation has paid staff or just volunteers, there may be a legal duty to provide first aid if organising a public event. It is advisable to check requirements with the local authority, and read the Cabinet Office guide:

* [Organising a voluntary event](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events)

Working with other organisations

When working with other organisations, it is also important to consider how Health and Safety is managed. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) recommends that organisations address the following points:

1. Which organisation has ultimate responsibility for health and safety;
   1. How this organisation will implement its policies and procedures
   2. What it will do if its standards are not met
2. How to ensure volunteers understand their health and safety responsibilities
   1. The steps they should take if they are unhappy with or concerned about health and safety risks
   2. How this information will be recorded.

Risk assessments

For both organisations with paid staff and volunteer-only organisations, it is good practice to use risk assessments in fulfilling the legal duty of care. Risk assessments completed for paid staff can be extended, whilst volunteer-only organisations will need to create assessments for volunteers only. They can be generated per volunteer role, especially if the role is not carried out by paid staff.

1. Potential risks *to* volunteers

Risk assessments should comply with regulations concerning fire safety, first aid and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations. Whilst volunteer-only organisations are not legally obliged to comply with these regulations, it is strongly recommended that the guidelines are followed in order to fulfil the spirit of duty of care. These regulations are covered by:

* [Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Safety at Work Toolkit](https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/index.htm)

Anyone you recruit to volunteer from home should also be risk assessed. Helpful information is available here:

* [Volunteers based at home (Third Sector Support Wales)](https://wcva.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Risk-assessment-volunteers-based-at-home.pdf)

For information on risk assessments relating to volunteer involving organisations, visit the following HSE web page:

* [Managing low risk - what do voluntary organisations need to do](https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/manage-low-risk.htm)?7

2. Potential risks *caused by* volunteers

Under the spirit of the duty of care, organisations need to ensure that they have considered any potential risks to service users, customers or the general public by engaging volunteers. Ways that these risks can be addressed involve considering:

* Are volunteers adequately trained in order to ensure they do not create safety hazards to themselves and others?
* Are volunteers adequately trained in order to minimise any risk to the organisation’s reputation?
* Are volunteers supervised in accordance with the responsibilities and liabilities of the role?

This latter question ties in with whether volunteers will need to be DBS checked, which is covered in our fact sheet:

🖰 [2e. FACT SHEET Volunteers and DBS checking](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q-8Nke6RBWhJ8U3yO-TfuRySYPwlmrge/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=112629552432254528981&rtpof=true&sd=true)

Safeguarding

See the following links for comprehensive advice on safeguarding information for charities:

🖰 Warwickshire CAVA resource library: safeguarding section

🖰 [Warwickshire County Council: Warwickshire Safeguarding Board](http://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk)

🖰 [National Council for Volunteering Organisations: safeguarding section](https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers/keeping/safeguarding-volunteers)

🖰 [GOV.UK safeguarding information for charities](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/charities-how-to-protect-vulnerable-groups-including-children)