

A Vision for Volunteering in Bradford District

Bradford's Policy Statement of Good Practice in Working with Volunteers

Introduction

All organisations should have a Volunteering Policy which encompasses their Equal Opportunities Policy, Health and Safety Policy and any other policies/legal requirements which have an impact on its volunteering.

The Volunteering Policy should incorporate all volunteer and organisational rights and responsibilities.

As a minimum, it should be based on the following areas:

Recruitment and Selection

- In order to recruit a diverse base of volunteers from different ethnic, cultural, faith, social and other backgrounds the organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy/Statement must be reflected in its volunteer recruitment practices.
- Organisations will need to consider the type of selection procedures which are appropriate.
- The selection process should consider the needs of the organisation, the needs of the prospective volunteer, and their suitability for the role in question. Interviews should normally be conducted in order that both parties are given the opportunity to find out about each other.
- Other vetting procedures including the request for character references, Criminal Records Bureau checks etc., will be determined by the type of work to be undertaken and the nature of the organisation.

If CRB checks are carried out, the organisation should have its own guidelines on how the results of checks are used.

- Organisations who are unable to offer a placement to a volunteer should refer them either to another organisation or to a local Volunteer Centre.

Management of Volunteers

The organisation should ensure that:

- Volunteers are not used as a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteers are given suitable induction training at the beginning of their placement.
- Volunteers each have a named contact person.
- Regular supervision appropriate to the task undertaken and the volunteer's needs is provided.
- Volunteers' training needs are assessed and appropriate arrangements are made to meet these needs.
- Volunteers are given opportunities to participate in the decision-making of the organisation.
- Expectations of volunteers are made clear (preferably in writing), e.g: regarding Equal Rights, Health and Safety, etc.
- Each volunteer's role, including the role boundaries, is understood by all parties involved.
- All volunteers have access to the organisation's complaints/grievance procedures.

Support to Volunteers

Volunteers should be regarded as vital members of an organisation and its work. They need to be valued.

For example, an organisation should:

- Regularly show appreciation to their volunteers.
- Provide volunteers with all the appropriate and up-to-date information they need to carry out their roles.
- Ensure that volunteers have a good support network.
- Maintain regular contact with its volunteers.

Confidentiality

- Where an organisation is asking volunteers to deal with sensitive information about service users, details of its confidentiality procedures should be available and given to its volunteers.
- Information about volunteers is also a matter of confidentiality - for example, names, addresses, results of any vetting, etc., must be stored securely and not divulged to others except on a need-to-know basis.

Health and Safety

- All organisations have both a moral and legal obligation to ensure the health and safety of their volunteers.
- Organisations must have an appropriate health and safety policy which reflects the nature of the volunteering activity and which is explained to the volunteer.

Insurance

- Organisations should not involve volunteers without at least basic insurance cover being in place, i.e: public and employer's liability and any relevant additional cover if volunteers are involved in special services/activities.
- It is also recommended that personal accident cover is made available to volunteers.
- All volunteers should be made aware of the cover provided.

Expenses

- Organisations should offer to pay out-of-pocket expenses to volunteers.
- The procedure for claiming expenses should be made clear and known to volunteers.
- Only actual expenses should be reimbursed and flat-rate payments that do not reflect actual expenses must be avoided.

"Volunteers are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills for community benefit."

