Knowledge Gateway

Practice Guidance and Information

Creating a Volunteer Agreement

What is a volunteer agreement?

A volunteer agreement makes it clear what the volunteer can expect from the organisation and what, in turn, the organisation expects from the volunteer. It usually sits alongside a volunteer role description and volunteer policy.

Whilst it sets out expectations, an agreement is not a legally binding contract. Because of this, the style of writing should reflect that the organisation hopes a volunteer will act in a certain way, rather than state that they must or have to do so.

Please remember that volunteering is a freedom of choice, and this spirit should be reflected in the volunteer agreement.

As volunteer roles change over time, the agreement should be reviewed to make sure it remains relevant to what they are actually doing.

Why is a volunteer agreement needed?

- It lets the volunteer know that the organisation is committed to their involvement and what they can expect to get out of their volunteering.
- Makes it clear what is expected of the volunteer.
- Volunteers can understand what their rights are. For example, access to induction, support, insurance, expenses, health and safety, equal opportunities, managing any difficulties and training.
- It explains the boundaries between the organisation and volunteers.
- It defines the role as a volunteering role.

What should I include in my agreement?

Generally, a volunteer agreement is divided into two key sections: responsibilities of the organisation and of the volunteer. You don't have to include everything, but it is a good idea to use the following as a starting point.

The organisation's responsibilities

- Outline what you hope for from the volunteer and what the volunteer can expect from your organisation.
- Provide a full induction and any training required for the role.
- Provide appropriate support and flexibility including training as required.
- Support the volunteer to achieve the standards required, including providing a named contact.
- Treat volunteers in line with the organisations equality and diversity policy.
- Reimburse appropriate out of pocket volunteer expenses, related to their volunteer role.
- Provide insurance cover.
- Implement good health and safety practice.
- Address any problems that may arise during the course of the volunteering.

The volunteer's responsibilities

- Perform their role to their best ability.
- To volunteer as agreed within the volunteer role description.
- Follow the organisation's volunteer policies and procedures, including health and safety and equality and diversity in relation to its staff, volunteers and anybody with whom they work.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the organisation and of its clients, customers or service users as appropriate.
- Honour their commitment as agreed, except in exceptional circumstances when, where possible, reasonable notice is expected.
- Provide relevant paperwork when required.
- To agree to appropriate checks under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme in Scotland, if required.

Organisations should adapt their generic volunteer agreement for each volunteer role. You can do this by consulting with current volunteers, fellow staff members and board members.

Consider who in the organisation should sign the volunteer agreement.

What next?

Remember to regularly review the agreement and keep it up to date. It is useful to get feedback from volunteers and colleagues and involve them in the review process. Even if you don't make big changes, by looking through it and ensuring it is still fit for purpose, you are emphasising its importance to the organisation.

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The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

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This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**