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Planning for involving volunteers - Volunteer Policy

Larger organisations, especially those that have paid staff, tend to have a written volunteer policy and associated procedures.

Smaller organisations may not need a full policy but it is a good idea to have discussed and agreed a plan for involving volunteers that covers the principles set out below.

Why have a volunteer policy?

A volunteer policy or plan helps your organisation to set out the terms under which you will involve volunteers. It doesn't need to be a lengthy document, but it will help your trustees, managers, staff and volunteers to understand the reasons for involving volunteers, the types of activities they will carry out, and how they will be supported. A policy should be created with the involvement of leaders, staff and volunteers at all levels and will need to be reviewed regularly, to ensure it reflects the organisation's ethos around volunteering.

Your policy or plan may include:

- The reasons / ethos behind volunteer involvement
- Information about the organisation - its mission or purpose
- How volunteers will be recruited, and the selection process
- How volunteers will be welcomed and introduced to the organisation
- How volunteers will be supported and supervised
- Opportunities for volunteer development and training
- The range of volunteering opportunities available
- Your approach to volunteer expenses
- How you will manage risks and protect people from harm, eg health and safety, insurance, etc
- How you will deal with any problems that may arise
- What happens when a volunteer moves on from your organisation

You may also wish to include other relevant information, statements or links to other policies if you have them, such as:

- Equality and diversity
- Safeguarding
- DBS checks and criminal record information (where applicable)
- Health and safety procedures

Where can I get some help?

Information and guidance on planning for volunteer involvement or drafting a volunteer policy is available from your local Volunteer Centre. Whilst sample policies can be helpful, and are easily downloaded, we encourage you to think the process through, so that your policy reflects your specific set of circumstances and your organisation's values.