

Best Practice Award

Launched in 2004, Volunteer Action's Best Practice Award Scheme for local Volunteer Involving Organisations has been achieved by 32 local organisations, with many having achieved their re-assessment. More organisations are working towards their Award for the first time.

Why you should aim for Best Practice

This is your chance to show how well your organisation supports its volunteers. You will be awarded a Best Practice Certificate on demonstrating that you are committed to providing a positive and supported experience for ALL volunteers.

The checklists below is designed to help you towards achieving Best Practice in working with and supporting volunteers by having organisational policies and practices in place.

You will find information and practical examples in the Best Practice Toolkit. The sections of the toolkit can be looked at separately with the understanding that your Volunteer Policy and procedures will affect many of your other policies.

For example the Health and Safety policy statement covering your volunteers needs to be written with equal opportunities in mind, affording your volunteers the same degree of protection as your paid staff.



YOUR ORGANISATION AND POLICIES

Once you have established why you want to involve volunteers and the tasks that they could be involved with, it is then best practice to prepare a **volunteer policy**.

This is a **written statement** of the aims and values of your organisation and the role that volunteers have in it.

[Example volunteer policy: Section 5, B1]

If your organisation has a volunteer policy it might be worth checking when it was last reviewed.

A volunteer policy:

- Outlines to staff, management committee, volunteers and service users how and why, volunteers will be involved
- Raises awareness about your organisation's commitment to volunteers and volunteering
- Gives **recognition & status** to volunteers and volunteering within your organisation
- Clarifies what volunteers have a right to expect from the organisation

Further help or information

Developing your Volunteer Policy, information and updates on policies and best practice contact your local Volunteer Action office.

- Clarifies what the organisation has a right to expect from the volunteer
- Clarifies procedures in working together and resolving problems
- Makes commitment to equal opportunities
- Clarifies boundaries between paid staff and volunteers (where applicable)

Volunteering best practice

When your draft policy is complete, distribute it to as many of your organisation's stakeholders as possible for **consultation**. This ensures people are aware of the policy.

Once the volunteer policy is agreed it should be communicated and distributed.

Remember

A policy needs to be reviewed regularly to keep up to date with changes in legislation, policy and practice.

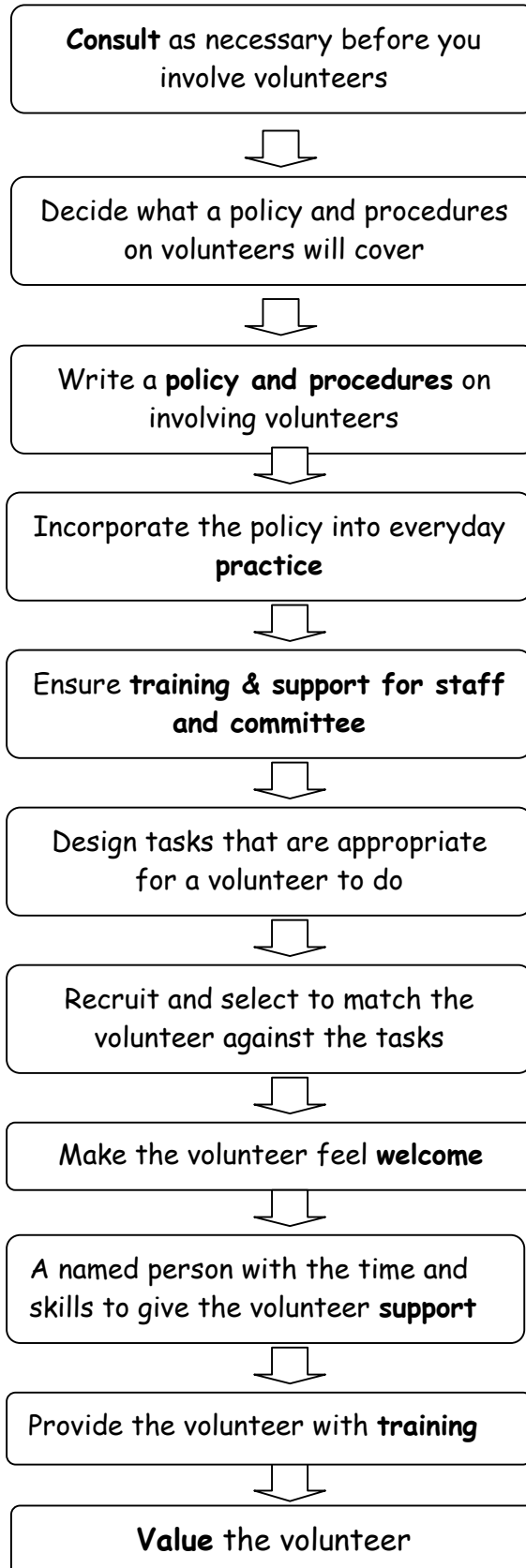
The Next Step

Once your volunteer policy is in place you can then develop guidelines, policies and procedures to define the roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers in your organisation.

If you implement the procedures in the following sections then you will be on your way towards best practice in working with and supporting volunteers.

THE KEY STAGES IN INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS

Think about why you wish to involve volunteers in your organisation; the training and support staff and committee will require in recruiting and selecting; supporting and developing and resolving problems with volunteers.



For a quick check of where you are now complete the checklist below (you can work through this with the help of a member of staff from Volunteer Action).

Training & Development for your Organisation/Volunteer Managers Training offered by Volunteer Action	Have staff/ volunteers attended	Action to be taken?
Planning Strategically for Volunteer Involvement Helping to plan volunteer programmes at strategic level, and establish appropriate frameworks for volunteering within your organisation.		
Effective Volunteer Recruitment Helping to identify appropriate strategies to attract the right people to fill these voluntary roles.		
Matching Volunteers to Roles and Tasks Helping to explore issues and practice in the selection and matching of volunteers to appropriate tasks within the organisation.		
Increasing Volunteer Effectiveness through Training and Development Helping to explore ideas for the planning of effective training for volunteers and to increase knowledge and skills in planning and implementing an on-going training programme for volunteers.		
Supporting and Supervising Skills Helping to develop your ideas, skills and strategies regarding the overall task of support and supervision of volunteers.		
Developing Diversity within a Volunteer Programme Helping to explore issues relating to building diversity within your volunteer programme.		
Health and Safety and Risk Management in Volunteer Programmes Helping to equip participants with the knowledge to address relevant health and safety issues which impact on volunteering, and provide an overview of risk management		
Motivation, Retention and Development of Volunteers Helping to explore the areas of motivation and development of volunteers to help identifying key ways of increasing volunteer retention within the organisation		

<p>Developing Volunteer Portfolios</p> <p>Helping to explore how a portfolio can be developed and structured to assist in the training and development of volunteers.</p>		
<p>Creating Positive Volunteer-Staff Relations</p> <p>Helping to focus on addressing the issues surrounding volunteer-staff relations.</p>		
<p>Involving Young Volunteers</p> <p>Helping to focus on the benefits of involving young people in your organisation, and how to remove the barriers to their involvement</p>		
<p>Investment in Excellence</p> <p>A 5-day programme that equips you with a set of tools to challenge perception of yourself, your colleagues and the organisation's vision.</p>		
<p>Roles & Responsibilities of Volunteer Involving organisations</p> <p>A quick introduction to setting up a volunteer programme, from drawing up task descriptions and a recruitment strategy to support for your volunteers.</p>		

Other training - In-house/external

Volunteering tasks		Do you have	Do you need	Action to be taken?
Do you have a Volunteer Policy?				
Task Description				
Do you clearly describe the tasks that you require the volunteer to do?				
Is it plainly evident that they are open to everyone?				
Are any restrictions clearly stated?				
Are stated restrictions appropriate and/or valid?				
Volunteer Agreement				
Do you provide a written Volunteer Agreement?				
Training and Development of Volunteers				
Do you have a planned induction?	Organisation			
	Volunteer Role			
Are your volunteers provided with a handbook for their reference?				
Does the handbook include copies of relevant policy documents?				
Does your Training & Development statement clearly include volunteers?				
Is there a name person responsible for the individual volunteers?				
Do you develop an annual training plan for volunteers?				
Do you provide training to develop volunteer's skills?				
Do you provide personal development training for volunteers?				

Other Volunteer Training & Support

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Fair & Equal Volunteering	Do you have	Do you need	Action to be taken
Do you have an Equal Opportunities Policy? Is this explicitly for volunteers?			
Does your Equal Opportunities Policy include a diversity statement			
Do you have a Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Policy			
Do you require your volunteers to undertake a disclosure?			
Is there a complaints procedure for volunteers?			
Is there a volunteer disciplinary procedure?			
Are volunteers made aware of how complaints and disciplinary procedures work?			
How well do you communicate changes in policy and procedures?			
Do you reimburse out of pocket expenses to volunteers?			
Do you offer childcare or other appropriate expenses if necessary?			
Do you recognize and provide support for people with literacy issues?			
Do you accommodate the needs of people with disabilities?			
Do you offer flexible volunteering times?			
Do you work at the pace of the volunteer?			
Do you offer individual/personal development opportunities to volunteers?			
Do you have volunteer drivers? Are there age restrictions? If so are these reasonable?			
Do you work with young volunteers?			
Do you work with volunteers with additional support?			
Recruitment and Selection			
Is the selection procedure appropriate for your organisation			

Application forms			
Do you offer appropriate support to complete an application form?			
Do you ask relevant questions for matching suitability of the person to the role?			
Do you request completion of an Equal Opportunities monitoring form?			
Interviews			
Do you have an informal or formal interview process?			
Do you apply a standard interview/selection process to all volunteers?			
Do you make appropriate arrangements for applicants with disabilities?			
Do you always cover the same topics and issues with each potential volunteer?			
Do you avoid requesting information that contravenes equal opportunity principals?			
Do you respect equal opportunity principles when requesting information to decide someone's suitability?			
Do you take up references?			
Do you offer a Training/Trial period?			
Support & Supervision			
Are volunteers given regular, scheduled support and supervision by experienced staff?			
Do you hold peer support meetings?			
Is there a written record kept of supervision notes?			
Are appropriate confidentiality procedures agreed and followed?			
Are there opportunities offered to discuss personal issues that affect the work?			
Do you undertake periodic reviews with volunteers? If so how often?			
Are volunteers involved in decision making/ attendance at team meetings?			

How do you Recognise the commitment/contribution?			
Do you have an Exit Strategy?			
Other information			

Other Policies - do you have any of the following?	Do you have	Do you need	Action to be taken
Health & Safety Policy			
Risk assessments			
Lone Worker Policy			
Confidentiality			
Data Protection			
Insurance	Public liability		
	Volunteer drivers		
	Equipment		

Other guidelines/policies, e.g.: accepting gifts

Any other relevant information