



Information Sheet No 21

Developing a Volunteer Agreement

While organisations should be careful to avoid creating a contract of employment with their volunteers, it can be useful to have a volunteer agreement in place. Volunteer Agreements set out what the volunteer can expect from the organisation in terms of treatment and support, and what the organisation expects from the volunteer. It helps to clarify exactly where both volunteer and organisation stand, and acts as a declaration of intent.

Care must be taken to avoid language that implies obligation on the part of the volunteer. For example, volunteers should not sign something that says they will volunteer for you for the next 6 months. It smacks less of a contractual obligation if the agreement says that they intend to come in on Monday mornings until notice is given.

Think in terms of expectations and aspirations rather than requirements

Examples of the commitments an organisation make are:

- To provide a full induction and any training necessary for the volunteer role
- To provide a named person for the volunteer
- To treat volunteers in line with its equal opportunities policy
- To reimburse out of pocket expenses
- To provide insurance cover for volunteers
- To implement good health and safety practice

Volunteers might agree to:

- Follow the letter and spirit of the organisation's policies and procedures, including equal opportunities, health and safety and confidentiality
- To meet mutually agreed time commitments, or give notice if this is not possible.

There is no need for the agreement to be signed – remember it is not intended to be a legal document.

While it will not hurt to add a disclaimer to the effect that the agreement is not intended to be legally binding, this is likely to be ignored by an employment tribunal if they consider the actual relationship between the organisation and the volunteer to be employment

Make sure your procedures do not establish such a relationship.
It is important that volunteer agreements do not become dead pieces of paper!
Volunteers should receive agreements as part of their induction. It is useful to display agreements prominently and review them regularly.

Disclaimer

This information is intended for guidance only, East Riding Voluntary Action Services Ltd. Has endeavoured to check that details are correct, but please seek independent advice before applying the guidance to your organisation