



Volunteer Centre
East Riding

Information Sheet No.4

TASK DESCRIPTIONS

Although it is important not to over formalise volunteering, the use of a task description can be useful for the following reasons:

1. Volunteers need to be clear what they are being asked to do and where boundaries lie – a task description can help clarify these issues.
2. A task description can help clarify a volunteer's distinctive role and how it differs from that of paid staff – helps avoid job substitution.
3. A 'task description' provides a clear framework within which the person interviewing can make an assessment of whether the volunteer is right for that role.
4. Assessing an individual's ability to carry out the tasks listed in a task description is fairer than assessing them against a subjective idea of what constitutes a 'good volunteer'. It is part of good equal opportunities practice to limit the possibility of making a biased judgement.
5. Volunteers will be covered by insurance if they keep within their brief – it is easier to prove that they did so if the 'brief' has been detailed in writing.
6. A written 'task description' can help volunteers assess if the placement is right for them.
7. A 'task description' can add status to the volunteer's role.
8. A 'task description' is a useful tool during support and supervision.

What should be included?

- * The purpose of the role
- * Tasks to be undertaken
- * Where the work will be undertaken
- * When the volunteer is needed – days/times
- * Who the volunteer is accountable to
- * What is required of the volunteers, confidentiality, punctuality, a willingness to be trained etc.

It may be useful to add what you will offer the volunteer:

- * Expenses
- * Training
- * Support and supervision

Other issues:

- * It is important not to devise a task description in such a rigid way that potential volunteers, eg. people with physical disabilities, are excluded. The aim should be to enable people to be involved rather than prevent them.
- * Task descriptions should be reviewed regularly to meet changing needs and circumstances.

DISCLAIMER

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

