

# RESOURCE GUIDE 2

## QUALITY AREA 2: PLANNING FOR VOLUNTEERS

*People, policies and procedures have been put in place to ensure volunteering is well-managed.*

This Resource Guide will explore good practice in relation to planning for the people, policies and procedures that will be needed to support volunteering. It will explore the following standards:

- 2.1 There are specific and proportionate systems and processes for volunteer involvement that are regularly reviewed**
    - 2.1.1 Developing a volunteer policy*
    - 2.1.2 Developing procedural guidelines and standards*
    - 2.1.3 Monitoring and reviewing practice*
  - 2.2 Relevant people in the organisation are aware of systems and processes relating to volunteering and why they are important**
  - 2.3 There are designated people responsible for volunteers and volunteering that have experiences, competencies and attributes for the role**
  - 2.4 Systems are in place to ensure the management of risk, safeguarding, health and wellbeing and protection of volunteers, the organisation, and others**
    - 2.4.1 Understanding legal responsibilities*
    - 2.4.2 Managing risk strategies*
    - 2.4.3 Some protection issues*
  - 2.5 There are problem solving procedures to deal with issues raised by or about volunteers**
  - 2.6 Records of volunteer involvement are maintained in line with data protection**
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- 2.1 There are specific and proportionate systems and processes for volunteer involvement that are regularly reviewed**

In the [Introduction to these Resource Guides](#), we said that best practice can look different in a range of volunteering contexts. However, we also highlighted that there were some key principles that should be in place regardless of the size, sector or type of volunteering role. One of these was to **ensure that volunteers are aware of the systems and processes in place to make volunteering effective**. In this section, we will outline the key policies and procedures that you could consider putting in place for your volunteering activity. Two key points before you proceed:

- a. The processes need to be **proportionate**. For example, the local Parkrun may not need lots of policies and procedures to make volunteering effective. However, it will need things in place to ensure volunteers have a positive and enjoyable experience, are involved in a safe environment and that they feel valued and respected for what they do. Whereas a large voluntary or public sector organisation working with young people or adults at risk of harm may need a raft of written policies and procedures.

- b. Whatever systems and processes you develop to support your volunteering activity, make sure you **review** them regularly. This could be as often as once a year but should be no longer than every three years. Volunteers should be included in the reviews - asking them what they think will tell you if the policy or procedure is achieving what it was set up to do (you could do a survey or facilitate a conversation over a cup of tea). It is good to get policies and procedures agreed by your committee or Board and add the date approved to each document to keep you on track.

### 2.1.1 Developing a volunteer policy

The most important policy that you can have is your **volunteer policy**. This can look different depending on your activity and context but regardless of what it looks like, it should give direction and provide a structure for what you intend to do to involve volunteers effectively. Systems or processes (procedures) will then be based on this. *Basically, policies tell people what to do, while procedures tell people how they should do it.*

Even the newest, smallest and least formalised groups make policy decisions regularly- they just do not call them policies or write them down. For example, deciding that volunteers should not be asked to do work which is the responsibility of a paid member of staff is making policy. Writing such decisions in the form of policies lends them greater weight and encourages people to comply. The policy sets a boundary for the whole organisation. Inside the boundary, things are acceptable and outside the boundary, things are not. They can clarify responsibilities and define lines of communication. Importantly, they also provide continuity over time and across the organisation, promoting equity and stability in the organisation as individuals come and go. Click here to find out more on why it is important to have a volunteer policy- see [Developing a Volunteer Policy](#).

This is a basic framework of a volunteer policy. Each heading should represent a different section in your policy (see breakdown within our [Volunteer Policy Framework](#)):

- Values
- Planning for volunteer involvement
- Recruitment and selection
- Management of volunteers

### 2.1.2 Developing procedural guidelines and standards

Once policy statements have been written and approved by the management committee, then there is a huge task in developing the detail behind the statements. It is highly likely that some systems and procedures will already exist, perhaps on an informal or unwritten basis. Some procedures will stand as they are, others may simply need to be put in writing, while others will need to be revised in light of the new policy statements. The process of developing policy is also unlikely to highlight gaps where no systems exist or specific procedures are unclear.

The framework above provides a checklist for the processes that you need to develop. More information will be available under each of the quality areas in these Resource Guides. Some of the key procedures will be for:

- Recruitment and Selection- see [Resource Guide 4](#) for more info.
- Equity and Diversity- see [Resource Guide 3](#) for more info.
- Health, Safety & Wellbeing- see [Resource Guide 2](#) (section 2.4) for more info.
- Problem Solving- see [Resource Guide 2](#) (section 2.5) for more info.
- Induction and Training- see [Resource Guide 4](#) (section 4.4) for more info.

- Support and Supervision- see [Resource Guide 5](#) for more info.
- Recognition- see [Resource Guide 6](#) for more info.

### **2.1.3 Monitoring and reviewing practice**

The policy process never really stops. Once policies and procedures are implemented, they then need to be monitored for compliance, reviewed regularly for relevance and revised as needed. Ensure that appropriate structures for regularly reviewing policies and procedures are in place and most of all, listen to volunteers to hear what they are saying about the effectiveness of all procedures.

## **2.2 Relevant people in the organisation are aware of systems and processes relating to volunteering and why they are important**

It is not enough to have processes in place, you need to make sure that others know about them and understand the reason for them. See above information on why you have a volunteer policy in the first place- see [Developing a volunteer policy](#). Including reference to the value placed on volunteer involvement in staff inductions and ensuring accessibility of policies and procedures in Volunteer Handbooks are simple ways to make sure the status of volunteer policies and procedures are recognised.

## **2.3 There are designated people responsible for volunteers and volunteering that have experiences, competencies and attributes for the role**

Recruiting the right person (paid or unpaid) to be responsible for volunteers and volunteering is key. Experience of volunteering, competencies around working with people and attributes around valuing volunteers are important as a starting point. However, organisations should also consider the skills needed to support different types of volunteer involvement and try to recruit someone who will provide a good match- see [Resource Guide 1](#) (See section 1.4.1).

The following Job/Role Description ([Sample Volunteer Manager Job/Role Description](#)) outlines the types of activities that you need someone to do when looking after volunteers.

Providing training on how to work with volunteers is essential and a worthwhile investment. It can develop skills such as how to motivate volunteers but also allows for sharing of ideas on how to attract volunteers to activities or provide support on dealing with volunteer dilemmas- click this link to see [available training](#)

## **2.4 Systems are in place to ensure the management of risk, safeguarding, health and wellbeing and protection of volunteers, the organisation, and others**

When you involve volunteers, you need to be aware of risks to the health, safety and protection of volunteers and to service-users, paid staff and members of the public. These will vary hugely, of course, depending on the nature of an organisation's business, the characteristics of beneficiaries or client groups and the sort of work that volunteers undertake. While aiming for a best practice approach to the protection of volunteers and those with whom they come into contact, you must firstly consider the nature of an organisation's legal responsibilities in relation to the health and safety of volunteers and others.

## 2.4.1 Understanding legal responsibilities

Organisations have a legal duty of care to avoid causing harm to anyone as a result of their actions. The Health and Safety Executive advises that “in general, the same health and safety standards should be applied to voluntary workers as they would to employees exposed to the same risks.”

A best practice approach, therefore, suggests that even measures that refer specifically to ‘employees’ should be understood to apply to anyone who does work for the organisation, whether or not they are paid. At the very minimum, every volunteer-involving organisation must consider:

- ✓ How they ensure the provision and maintenance of **safe premises and equipment** for use by volunteers;
- ✓ How they provide **information and training** to ensure volunteers work safely;
- ✓ How everyone, including volunteers, is made aware of his/her **rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety**;
- ✓ How they **assess and deal with risks** posed to and by volunteers, including risks to personal safety, access to confidential information; and
- ✓ What their **health and safety policy** says about volunteers and their work.

For more information on Legal Responsibilities in relation to Health and Safety, click here – [Health and Safety and Volunteering](#).

## 2.4.2 Managing Risk Strategies

Organisations need to be proactive in protecting the health and safety of all those who come into contact with the organisation. Important things include:

- ✓ Having a **health and safety policy**- see [Health and Safety and Volunteering](#).
- ✓ Having a good insurance policy- see [Volunteers and Insurance Information Sheet](#).
- ✓ Providing a thorough induction and training for volunteers- see [Resource Guide 4](#) (section 4.4).

However, organisations still need to calculate the risks that workers, beneficiaries and the public might be exposed to as a result of the organisation’s activities and take steps to remove those that are unacceptable.

Health and safety at work regulations place a legal duty upon employers and the self-employed to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees, volunteers and others. Risk is simply the potential for harm to be done, and a risk assessment, therefore, is a careful examination of what might cause harm or damage in your specific activities. It usually involves a process of identifying, evaluating, controlling and reviewing risks.

Conducting a risk assessment highlights the potential areas for concern and helps you decide whether existing procedures and precautions are sufficient, or whether further measures need to be taken to prevent harm. Separate assessments should be made of the risks involved in volunteer activities, looking at each volunteer role, venues and tasks. The key to effective risk assessment is to be organised and thorough in identifying the potential for harm or damage in your volunteers’ activities. For more information on risk assessing volunteer activities and a useful template for how to do it- see [Risk assessment and volunteers](#); and [Sample Risk Assessment Template](#), which consider some examples of volunteer activities and the risks caused by Covid-19.

### 2.4.3 Some Protection Issues

Protecting people that work for/with you is more than just protecting their physical safety and organisations that involve volunteers need to be aware of a raft of other issues that are just as important. Some of the others to think about are:

#### a. Distinction between volunteers and employees

Remember the definition of volunteering. This is very clearly different to an employee definition, yet many volunteer-involving organisations sometimes face dilemmas around the distinction between volunteers and employees: Who should undertake which kinds of work? Should the two groups be treated differently or the same in some respect? Is it okay to have an agreement with a volunteer? What happens if I provide out-of-pocket expenses?

Creating an employment-type relationship with volunteers could have serious implications for volunteers as well as organisations, but such confusion is not difficult to avoid. The key to avoiding or resolving these dilemmas is to be absolutely clear about the nature of the relationships that exist between the volunteer, the organisation and paid staff, and to ensure that whatever policies and procedures exist for managing volunteer involvement reflect those relationships. It is important that organisations do not simply take employment-based procedures and apply them wholesale to volunteer management. Specific procedures should be developed that reflect the flexible and voluntary nature of the relationship between volunteers and employees and the organisation. For more information on the distinction between volunteers, including case law in this area, see [Volunteers and the Law](#).

#### b. Data Protection

It is also important that you think about protecting a volunteers' information through effective data storage, record keeping and retention. You should also think about data that volunteers have access to in relation to other people in the organisation and its service users- see [Section 2.6](#); and [Volunteers and the Law](#)- GDPR section.

#### c. Emotional Wellbeing

Protecting your volunteers also includes looking after their health and emotional wellbeing. Organisations need to consider issues relating to an individual volunteer's health conditions and how this may impact on the role. You also need to have systems for volunteers to discuss and report any concerns about their own health, safety and wellbeing, or that of other people. In roles that are particularly stressful, it is recommended that volunteers have training on how to look after the mental health, as well as regular access to people for debriefing and support. Here are a few links from the Public Health Agency:

- ["How are you feeling?"- A guide to looking after your mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing](#)

#### d. Safeguarding practices

Organisations must ensure that they have all the safeguarding measures in place to keep volunteers, staff and service users safe. We will deal with safeguarding practice in [Resource Guide 4](#), but for now it is worth thinking about what your organisation needs to put in place to ensure you protect everyone. Safeguarding should be considered in relation to the needs of your organisation and the people



you work with, as well as the tasks and structure of the roles or activities. For example, where volunteers are involved with children or adults at risk, or specific issues around online volunteering then there must be a clear Safeguarding Policy with associated procedures. Promoting a culture of safeguarding with clear values, ensuring there is effective recruitment, thorough induction and detailed training are relevant to how you will safeguard your organisation, staff, volunteers and those you provide services for. The following links will look at policies and practices around working with children and adults at risk. Volunteers need to be trained in safeguarding practices so as they know how to keep themselves and others safe.

- [Keeping Children Safe: Our Duty to Care](#)
- [Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility](#)
- [Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy Standards](#)

## 2.5 There are problem solving procedures to deal with issues raised by or about volunteers

Volunteers are an invaluable resource, but the management of any resource can at times be problematic. Even though you have a fair recruitment and selection process to make a good match between the volunteer and the task and put in place the sorts of management procedures outlined in 2.2, problems can still occur. There will be minor issues, which may not need immediate attention, but may need monitoring. At the other end of the scale, are potential or actual crises that require clear thinking and decisive action. Most of the issues you identify will come down to three basic situations:

- A complaint about a volunteer
- A complaint by a volunteer
- Unsatisfactory performance by a volunteer

No matter what the size or seriousness of the problems, dealing with them can often be difficult, but having to do this without an agreed procedure can be an extremely stressful experience for everyone involved. However, certain procedures, if in place, may make it easier. As with all your volunteer management procedures, it is good practice to have procedures for dealing with difficult situations involving volunteers written and in place before you begin to involve volunteers- see [Problem Solving Procedures](#).

## 2.6 Records of volunteer involvement are maintained in line with data protection

In the course of any volunteer involvement, you will gather information about a volunteer. This could be just basic contact details, but it may also contain personal information, e.g. health conditions. Regardless of how much or how little personal data you maintain, you must have good systems for **protecting a volunteers' information** through effective data storage, record keeping and retention.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, there are data protection principles which set out the main responsibilities for organisations. It is also considered good practice to have a **Data Protection Policy** that will show your commitment to data protection and your methods for effective storage and retention in line with the legislation. For more information on Data Protection, click here- <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/accountability-and-governance/documentation/>

Record keeping should be proportionate to the needs of the organisation. You should have clear reasons for gathering the information and a rationale for which information you retain. It

must be clear where information is stored, who has access and how long records are kept after a volunteer moves on. You should also think about data that volunteers have access to in relation to other people in the organisation, including service users. Volunteers should be trained in dealing with data, be aware of data protection legislation, underlying principles and the importance of confidentiality- see [Volunteers and the Law](#)- GDPR section.