

Developing a Volunteer Agreement

Many organisations provide their volunteers with a letter or written agreement which sets out what is hoped for from the volunteer, and what the organisation will provide to help the volunteer do the work. There is no obligation to provide a volunteer agreement and it is up to you to decide if it would be appropriate within your organisation. It may be helpful, especially for long-term volunteers or those taking on a major task, to clarify the reasonable expectations for both parties. However, for other volunteers such agreements may be seen as unduly formal or restrictive. If an agreement is to be provided, try not to make it too formal and take and not to use language or imply conditions that appear contractual. It should never be called a contract.

The agreement should start by outlining the nature and purpose of the voluntary work, including the days and hours that have been agreed. It should indicate the start date and whether there is a settling in period. It should highlight to the volunteer that they have received (or will receive) key pieces of information, e.g. role description, relevant policies and procedures and volunteer handbook, which will provide important guidelines for their volunteering.

The agreement should then make statements to:

- *Clarify that it sets out **expectations**, not binding obligations.*
- *Indicate that no contract is intended, and the expectations are **binding in honour only**.*

Depending on the nature of the voluntary work, the agreement may then include any or all of the following expectations:

Volunteers' Expectations:

- A full induction and any training necessary for the volunteer role;
- Name of someone to whom the volunteer is responsible and who will provide support;
- To be treated with respect and in line with the organisation's policies, e.g. equal opportunities, health and safety;
- To be provided with reimbursable expenses, and clear information on how to claim them;
- To be covered by the organisation's insurance.

Organisation's Expectations:

- The volunteer will volunteer at the agreed times, or inform the organisation when this isn't possible;
- The volunteer will abide by the organisation's objectives and its equal opportunities, health and safety, confidentiality and other policies.

It may be useful and less formal to include some or all of the above points in a letter to the volunteer, and these can then be explained and clarified at the volunteer's induction where information will be given on all of the above points, and more! You can keep a dated copy in the volunteer's file. Remember, a volunteer agreement doesn't have to be signed by the volunteer. It is however, useful as a management tool as it:

- Clarifies particulars that have been agreed before a volunteer starts;
- Can be used to review progress and expectations of the organisation and volunteer;
- Can be used to address problems by reviewing what was agreed at the start;
- Can be the basis for discussion at the end of the settling in period.

Sample Volunteer Agreement - ANYTOWN COMMUNITY PROJECT

Name of Volunteer: John Brown

Volunteer role: Charity Shop Assistant

Ref: Voluntary work agreement for the above volunteer in the above project

Dear John,

I am pleased to welcome you as one of Anytown Community Project's volunteers. As you know, I am the Volunteer Manager and will be your main contact for support as a charity shop volunteer. Do not hesitate to contact me regarding any queries you have about your volunteering.

As agreed, we look forward to you starting with us on Monday 3 August 2015 with a 6 week settling-in period. This will include giving you an opportunity to work in the shop and will include an induction programme and initial training to support you in carrying out your role. After the 6 weeks, we will sit down and review your voluntary work placement with us. As agreed at the meeting, you are able to volunteer 6 hours each week, over 3 days - Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If you cannot attend, or have a particular problem, please contact me at the office. If you want to change this, please discuss it with me.

You have been given a copy of your role description, outlining the nature and purpose of the voluntary work. A full induction session will be arranged on your first day to go through our volunteers' handbook. This will provide you with what you need to know to make your volunteering experience with us a worthwhile and enjoyable one. You will of course receive a copy of the volunteer handbook.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline the expectations of both Anytown Community Project and you as one of our new volunteers. This of course is a voluntary arrangement – it is binding in honour only and you are free to withdraw at any time.

What we expect from you:

- That you will volunteer at the times agreed or inform us if this is not possible;
- That you will abide by our organisation's objectives and its equal opportunities, health and safety confidentiality and other policies.

What you can expect from us:

- a full induction and any training necessary to help you carry out your role;
- support from myself to help you carry out your role;
- to be treated with respect and in line with our organisation's policies on e.g. equal opportunities, health and safety;
- to be provided with reimbursable expenses, and clear information on how to claim them;
- to be covered by our organisation's insurance.

I hope you find this arrangement satisfactory and I look forward to discussing your role in more detail at induction.

Yours, Joe Bloggs
Volunteer Manager