

Inductions and handbooks for volunteers – A checklist

Volunteers need to be given a lot of information to help them carry out their role and to work effectively in your organisation. A good volunteer induction will provide an opportunity to relay most of this information. However, it is easy for volunteers to forget information that they have been given, so it is helpful if organisations develop a handbook for volunteers that covers all the areas required. This should *not* replace induction as we can not assume that people *will* read it or indeed *can* read it (NB. Accessibility) – rather it could be presented to the volunteer on completion of a full induction process or indeed during the induction process as a reference. Also, it is important to remember that like every document you produce, a handbook is only useful if it is kept up to date!

This handout shows what *could* be covered in a thorough induction process and shows that all this can indeed be covered in an information pack which could be called a volunteer handbook, welcome pack, induction pack or even volunteer guidelines! Remember this information is different to the information or *recruitment* packs that you may give out to *potential* volunteers – *prior to recruitment*!

This handout also demonstrates that a good induction process and handbook can provide evidence against several of the practices in Investing in Volunteers – the quality standard for organisations that involve volunteers. For more information on Investing in Volunteers, visit:

<https://investinginvolunteers.co.uk/>

COVERED IN INDUCTION	INCLUDE IN HANDBOOK?	NOTES FOR WRITING HANDBOOK
About the organisation - aims, philosophy and ethos - about the clients - the kind of work done and why - how the clients benefit - limitations of the organisation - structure: departments/teams - management - importance of volunteers to the organisation (volunteer policy)	✓	The handbook should cover a brief outline of the history of the organisation and what it aims to do. It should clearly outline how and why volunteers are involved. A management structure and how volunteers fit into this with a "Who's who " can be helpful. Your volunteer policy should be included at the start of the handbook.
The building - toilets, cloakrooms, parking, etc. - where to get tea/coffee (free?) - facilities for volunteers, e.g. notice board, pigeon hole - health and safety guidelines	✓	Volunteers need to have information to help them feel part of the team in your organisation. So things in the building such as parking, how to access tea/coffee, are there pigeon holes or a notice board for volunteers etc. are important! The handbook should give some of the health and safety information, e.g. fire exits and assembly points, location of first aid box and first aid officers. You could appendix the health and safety policy or let volunteers know where they could go to find it.

The role - volunteer's area of responsibility and boundaries with role - line management - days/hours, reliability - code of practice or guidelines and expectations for working as a volunteer - risks assessed as part of the role - likely problems and how to cope - system for reporting back - insurance cover - practical help and suggestions		The volunteer's role description should be included in their handbook and any other induction information that relates to how they carry out their role could be provided here too. In particular your code of practice is essential here including a clear outline of your expectations of the volunteer as well as what a volunteer can expect from you. It is good to provide written information on what to do if problems occur.
The support system - who will supervise them, where and when to find them - support available - supervision/support meetings - resources, facilities, equipment, training - are expenses paid and if so, how? - issues re expenses and benefits - how are poor behaviour, performance, complaints and grievances handled? - insurance cover for volunteers		Your procedures for support, supervision, training and dealing with any difficult situations should be clearly outlined. This includes information on how to claim expenses. You could attach an expenses form as an appendix.
Fellow workers - who and what they do - team meetings - working with others, diversity and equity - systems for internal communication		It is important for volunteers to know how they fit in to the organisation – are they invited to staff team meetings, are there other volunteer meetings. Helpful to provide information on any values or principles that the organisation may have, e.g. equity and diversity. Again, policies can be appended at the back or information on where to access the policy provided!
Other information - settling in period/ trial period - confidentiality		If you do not develop a volunteer agreement with your volunteers then a handbook may be the place to outline key issues such as the importance of a trial period, confidentiality. Even if you do provide a volunteer agreement some organisations will put a copy of the agreement in the handbook for easy reference.