VOLUNTEER POLICY FRAMEWORK

It is recognised by Volunteer Now that the guidelines in the Volunteer Policy Framework will be considered in the light of individual organisation's needs and/or situation. The sample statements (in italics) are provided only as an illustration of the relevant guidelines and are not intended as a standard or model for use by any other organisation. There may be other issues that you may want to address through your volunteer policy due to the nature of your organisation and particular volunteer roles. Remember the difference between policy and procedure. Policy outlines what you intend to do and procedures then outlines how you will do this.

Please Note: *At the end of the document you are signposted to a range of additional information sheets and templates that will help you to develop other key supporting policy and procedure documents.*

Values

Your volunteer policy will need to be based on a clear set of values around the involvement of volunteers. It is a good idea to begin the policy development process by agreeing a Value Statement, based perhaps on your organisation's historical perspective, its wider values and ethos and your reasons for involving volunteers.

1   The policy should value the distinctive contribution that volunteers can make.
"Anytown Community Project values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective on all our work."

2   The policy should recognise the status of volunteers as a legitimate and complementary resource to that of paid staff.
"Anytown Community Project recognises volunteers as a core part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff."

3   The policy should acknowledge that volunteering is a beneficial experience for both volunteers and service users.
"Insofar as Anytown Community Project benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers, we believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience too. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met."

4   You should also include a statement in this section on the organisation's beliefs about quality, equal opportunities, diversity, etc. and how they apply to volunteer involvement.
"Anytown Community Project strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation within a diverse and inclusive community. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices."

Preparation and planning

The next areas that the policy should address are those actions and systems that need to be put in place before the organisation is ready to actually involve volunteers. Even if volunteers are already active in your organisation, it is important to discuss the reasons for involving volunteers with staff, existing volunteers, service users or beneficiaries, Trade Unions etc. and agree on the nature and purpose of the volunteer involvement.

5   The policy should identify the ways in which the work of the organisation can be extended by the involvement of volunteers and ensure that these opportunities complement rather than substitute the work of paid staff (if applicable).
"Any town Community Project identifies roles for volunteers which extend the work of the organisation. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement, but never substitute, the work of paid staff."

6   Furthermore, the policy should make clear the position of volunteers in any staff dispute or action.
"Volunteers will not be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular tasks, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties."

7   The policy should specify how volunteer roles would be defined, including the purpose of each role and tasks involved.
"All volunteers are provided with a written role description, outlining the purpose, tasks and main expectations of their role. This role is reviewed at least once a year with the volunteer's supervisor."

8   The policy should clarify what protection volunteers can expect from the organisation in terms of insurance.
"Volunteers with Anytown Community Project are fully protected by the organisation's public liability and personal accident insurance. However, drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover."

9   The policy should state the organisation's position on the reimbursement of expenses to volunteers including what expenses can be claimed, and how to make a claim.
"Anytown Community Project reimburses volunteers' out of pocket expenses for travel and dependant care when claims are submitted on a standard Expenses Claim Form and accompanied by proof of expenditure."

10 It is essential that the policy commits the organisation to providing volunteers with adequate resources to do the work for which they were recruited.
"Anytown Community Project endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles."

11 The policy should make clear where the responsibility for day-to-day management of volunteers lies, specifying a member, or members, of staff as appropriate and making a clear commitment to providing such staff with appropriate training.
"The Project Manager is responsible for the overall management of volunteer involvement, including overseeing the implementation of this policy and dealing with any complaint or grievance relating to volunteers. The volunteer's designated supervisor provides support and supervision, identifies training requirements, countersigns expenses claims etc. All staff required to undertake such duties are provided with training in the management, supervision, support and training of volunteers."

Recruitment and selection
While attracting and selecting volunteers is a different process from staff recruitment, you should still aim to provide a fair, effective and transparent process that is truly inclusive. Although you may wish to keep the procedures fairly informal in practice, it is still vital to lay down minimum requirements clearly in your policy to help ensure that they are consistently implemented.

12 The policy needs to lay down the organisation's approach to volunteer recruitment, stating how volunteer opportunities will be made accessible to all sections of the community.
"Anytown Community Project is committed to serving and representing all the people of Anytown and wishes to see all sections of the community represented among our volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are widely promoted throughout Anytown, and we will endeavour to make recruitment and selection materials available in a format accessible to any individual or group, upon request. Furthermore, Anytown Community Project regularly reviews the make-up of the volunteer team to identify and target any under-represented group(s)."

13 The organisation should have an agreed recruitment and selection procedure for all volunteers which are appropriate to the role and which reflects best practice in relation to equal opportunities.
"Anytown Community Project implements a fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers and treats all information collected in this process confidentially.

All potential volunteers will go through a recruitment and selection process that is appropriate to the role offered. Anytown Community Project uses registration forms, references and informal chats / interviews. Additional measures may be implemented depending on the nature of the volunteer role and police records checks are conducted where appropriate.

*The process is conducted by appropriately briefed/trained staff and aims to allow **both** parties to give and receive sufficient information to assess whether the volunteer opportunities available match the potential volunteer's skills, qualities and interests.*

If unsuccessful, individuals will be offered an opportunity to discuss the outcome and identify possible alternatives within or outside of Anytown Community Project."

Management of volunteers

This section will specify how you intend to manage volunteers once they have become involved in your organisation. Goodwill alone is not enough to guarantee success and a pro-active approach is essential both to achieve the organisation's objectives and to ensure that volunteer' interests and motivations are met. Remember the voluntary nature of the relationship between volunteers and the organisation as you develop this section and try to ensure that the policy holds benefits for both parties.

14   The policy should outline how the expectations of both parties are to be agreed and communicated.
"Volunteers are provided with a written letter of welcome, which outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both the volunteer and Anytown Community Project. This agreement may be reviewed at any time with the consent of the volunteer and his/her supervisor, including during the initial review meeting at the end of the settling in / taster period (see point 16)."

15   Volunteers will need to be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken, and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform them with confidence. The policy should commit the organisation to an appropriate induction procedure.
"All volunteers are provided with an induction within six weeks of commencing their voluntary work. The induction: provides background information on Anytown Community Project; explains its structures and procedures; describes the volunteer role and the work team and outlines how s/he will be supported, including practical information on e.g. expenses.

During the induction period volunteers will be provided with written information on relevant legislation, organisational policies and codes of practice and will be given the opportunity to discuss any of the issues with the Project Manager and/or supervisor."

16   A settling in period is helpful in providing an opportunity to assess the suitability/progress of the placement, and allowing any problems to be resolved at an early stage. A policy statement should help ensure consistent implementation of the procedure and reassure new volunteers as to the reasons for such a measure.
"All volunteer placements are subject to a settling in period, the length of which depends on the nature and hours of the voluntary work. During this period volunteers are given additional support and a review meeting between the volunteer and his/her supervisor is held at the end of the settling in period to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the arrangement."

17   Access to regular support and supervision is key to maintaining effective and motivated volunteers. While the level of support and supervision needed will vary for different volunteers and different volunteer roles, the policy should commit the organisation to providing each volunteer with a named individual to provide this.
"All volunteers are allocated a named member of staff as their supervisor (although the Project Manager can also be contacted in case of an emergency or if the designated supervisor is unavailable). This individual can provide day-to-day help and guidance on any issue related to the voluntary work and is responsible for providing regular support to,

and supervision of, the volunteer. The frequency, duration and format of this support and supervision is agreed between the volunteer and his/her supervisor at the end of the settling in / taster period."

18 Training will enable volunteers to develop their capabilities and personal competence. The organisation must decide on what basis such training will be offered, and to whom. A clear policy statement will ensure fair and equal access to these opportunities.
"Anytown Community Project is committed to improving the effectiveness of volunteers. Volunteers may choose to attend any in-house training course that they feel is relevant to their voluntary work, subject to the approval of their supervisors and availability of places. Volunteers may also apply to the Project Manager for financial and practical support to attend external courses, where they can be shown to have a clear relevance to the voluntary work. (c/f Training and Development Policy). Volunteers attending approved training courses, internal or external, may do so within their normal hours of voluntary work and may reclaim out-of-pocket expenses."

19 The organisation must make arrangements to deal with any difficulties with the volunteer or their work in a fair, open and effective way. Equally volunteers should have access to an equivalent process to address grievances about any aspect of their work or how it is managed. The aim of such a policy is to protect all concerned while maintaining good relationships and effective volunteers where possible.
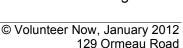*"Anytown Community Project aims to reflect the voluntary nature of our relationship with volunteers in all our policies and procedures for managing their involvement. Therefore, the volunteer's designated supervisor deals with minor complaints or grievances about or by volunteers or their work through the usual support and supervision procedures, in the first instance.*

However, we recognise our duty to protect the wellbeing and interests of all our stakeholders and therefore operate a formal complaints procedure in the case of more serious complaints. In the case of particularly serious offences, as specified in the Code of Practice, this process may be bypassed and/or the subject of the complaint asked to leave. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the matter will be handed over to the police."

20 Volunteers should, as far as possible, be fully integrated into the organisation. You may want to include a commitment in your policy to specific communication systems to keep volunteers informed, special measures to recognise and publicise their contributions, opportunities to take part in decision-making etc.
"Anytown Community Project recognises the core role that volunteers fulfil at every level of the organisation. It endeavours to communicate with volunteers in appropriate ways, including bulletin boards, e-mail and the monthly `Volunteer Update' newssheet.

It also recognises the importance of seeking volunteers' ideas and opinions at regular intervals and conducts an annual volunteer survey and provides suggestion boxes at each site. Feedback from volunteers is always welcome and any volunteer may make representations to the monthly meeting of the Management Committee."

21 Records should be kept of the work done by volunteers, to enable their involvement to be monitored effectively.
"In order to effectively monitor the work that volunteers do and how they are managed, a personal file is maintained for all volunteers, which includes: contact details and other relevant personal information; details of the application and selection process; agreements made; hours worked; records of support and supervision activities; training undertaken and any complaints or grievances made or received. Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and volunteers are entitled to inspect all such information pertaining to their own involvement."

22 If relevant, an organisation should make it explicitly clear that intellectual property rights of original work produced by volunteers has been transferred to the organisation i.e. flyers, photos, reports that volunteers have written in etc.
"Both volunteers and the organisation agree that the intellectual property rights of original work produced by volunteers automatically transfers to the organisation."

Volunteer Now has a wide range of information sheets and template documents to support you to meet the aims set out in your volunteer policy. These are available from the 'Volunteer Management' Section of Volunteer Now's publications
http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/supporting-organisations/publications

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