

information sheet 5.2

Working with volunteers - health and safety issues

Health and safety

The management of health and safety at work is equally as important as the management of your organisation's accounts. If there is a minor hiccup then the consequences may be small and easily put right. If there is a major flaw then the consequences may be drastic.

Duty of care

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act your organisation has a duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers as far as is reasonable and practicable.

There are five important areas to consider when addressing your responsibilities for the health and safety of volunteers within your organisation.

1. Induction

Every volunteer should receive an induction when they first start their placement. As well as covering general points such as the structure and aims of the organisation, this should also cover any important health and safety issues.

You may wish to devise a separate health and safety induction sheet containing information about things such as fire exits, safe use of equipment and first aid procedures.

2. Supervision

The standard and frequency of supervision provided to volunteers is important. Every volunteer should have a named supervisor, who themselves should be competent in health and safety and have a sound knowledge of the organisation's health and safety policy and procedures.

Regular supervision sessions will give the volunteer a chance to raise any concerns they may have about their role, and allow the supervisor to pass on important information and address any training needs.

3. Activities

It is a good idea to agree with the volunteer the main activities that they will be involved in during their placement. This will give you the opportunity to raise their awareness of any prohibited areas, equipment and activities. It is also good practice to risk assess these activities in accordance with the volunteers capabilities.

4. Training

It is always a good idea to provide training opportunities to volunteers to help them carry out their required tasks. Consider if the volunteer has any training needs relating to health and safety. Agree a training plan and timescales.

5. Insurance

All organisations that employ people must have valid employer's liability insurance and may also wish to take out public liability and other relevant insurances.

For more information on insurance see North Tyneside VODA's information sheet 4.02 – *insurance what you need to know*. It is important to consult with your insurers to verify that volunteers are covered under your policy.

For more information on developing good practice policies and procedures for volunteers in your organisation

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