Induction and Ongoing Training

A robust Induction and training programme will ensure that volunteers are able to carry out their volunteering role as effectively as possible.

Induction

Induction aims to introduce new volunteers to the organisation and ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role and how they will carry it out, as well as site-specific information and guidance on support and supervision mechanisms. It should cover:

• The organisation’s goals, and how it goes about achieving them, The organisational structure so that the volunteer understands where they fit within the organisation as a whole.

• Health and safety issues e.g. H&S policy, first aid procedures, accident reporting, policy on smoking, emergency exits and evacuation procedures

• Financial issues e.g. how to claim expenses (and what can be claimed)

• Volunteer agreement (what the volunteer can expect from the organisation, and vice versa)

• Arrangements for support and supervision, including if appropriate allocating a key member of staff, mentor or buddy

• Problem-solving procedures (discipline/grievance/complaints)

• Training programme/training needs identification process

• Relevant policies e.g. confidentiality, data protection, phone/internet use

Responsibility for induction sometimes lies within the HR function of a larger organisation, but in a smaller one it might all fall within the remit of the volunteer manager. It’s a good idea to try to involve other members of staff or volunteers, if you can, to help deliver specific parts of the process where they have special expertise or interest.

How much information do I include?

Don’t overwhelm new volunteers with masses of detail on their first day. At the same time, you need to make sure that what they need to know is covered. Just remember that it doesn’t all have to happen on the first day. It’s a good idea, though, to keep a checklist so that you and the volunteers can keep track of what has been covered and what hasn’t.

# Group v. individual induction

# If you have an intake of several volunteers at one time, group induction can take less time overall, and allows for discussions to take place where appropriate. It can also enable volunteers to start to build relationships and provide a support system for each other. If volunteers are joining you at irregular intervals, some topics such as confidentiality might be covered more effectively in a group context, and you may choose to wait and deal with that as part of a specific training session when you have enough people to contribute to the discussion.

Training

# When developing a training policy you will need to decide what will best meet your organisational requirements, bearing in mind the resources you have at your disposal. However you decide to address your volunteers training needs, the key is to make sure that it is designed around their roles. Current volunteers can be extremely useful in helping identify the elements in which they feel some formal training would be useful, and they will be able to feed in examples of situations that could form interesting case studies for discussion. Experienced volunteers might even find it interesting to deliver, or at least co-deliver, elements of a training programme for new volunteers

# The training your volunteers receive will depend entirely on their voluntary role, and on the numbers of volunteers you need to train at any one time. Initial training may be required to enable the volunteer to carry out their role effectively.

# On-going or refresher training may also be required to keep volunteers skills fresh, or to enable them to develop within the organisation and to take on further tasks.

# The most common way of training volunteers, and the most economical, is whilst they are carrying out their role. This is most appropriate if you only take on one volunteer at a time, and the tasks they will be carrying out will be relatively straightforward. A member of staff, or another volunteer, will show the volunteer how to do a task and then supervise them as they do it. This method is effective as long as the person doing the training takes care to make sure the new volunteer really understands what they are meant to be doing, and the volunteer feels able to ask questions without feeling foolish. It’s also a good idea to have some written notes for the volunteer to refer back to, if they aren’t sure of something.

# In-house training works best if you take on volunteers in groups and they need to be trained in fairly complex tasks or ideas. Organisations whose volunteers give legal advice, for example, usually have to devise a fairly rigorous in-house training programme. Similarly, where volunteers are working with vulnerable people there will be a need for some fairly in-depth training around areas such as setting boundaries, protection of children or vulnerable adults and confidentiality. Case studies used in the training will be relevant and realistic, and volunteers concerns will be addressed by people who know the way the organisation works, when training is carried out in-house

# External training can be used either for groups or individual volunteers, as you can either send one or two people on a public open course, or book the trainer to do the course purely for your organisation. This can be an expensive way to buy training, but can prove to be cost effective if your volunteers need to learn some more complex skills.