



Volunteer Centre

Frequently Asked Questions

What is expected of you as a volunteer?

Commitment and Reliability

You should be clear about the time you can offer the organisation – don't over commit yourself. You should give as much notice as possible if you are unable to carry out your volunteering duties at any time, or plan to be away for any reason.

Equal Opportunities

You must at all times treat other people with respect and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination, abuse, harassment or bullying in your dealings with colleagues (fellow volunteers or paid staff), clients, or members of the public.

Confidentiality

It is essential that any personal information you learn about individuals must not be disclosed to anyone outside the organisation without the permission of the person concerned. You may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and adhere to a confidentiality policy.

Health and Safety

It is essential that you comply with the organisation's Health and Safety Policy and that you do not take any action that might put you or any other person at risk of injury or harm.

You should always advise the organisation's Health and Safety Officer or Co-ordinator of any potential hazard or of any situation that you feel puts you or any other person at risk.

What can you expect from the organisation you volunteer with?

Will I be interviewed? What will they ask me? What can I ask them?

Most organisations will not formally interview you before they place you but they will probably want to have an informal chat. However, if the role has some responsibility, for instance, for money, or if you will be working with people or with dangerous equipment, the interview may be more formal. In either case this gives you, and the organisation, a chance to assess each other and an opportunity to ask questions.

The sort of questions the organisation will probably want to ask you will vary from organisation to organisation and depend on the type of voluntary work you are interested in.

The types of questions you may be asked:

- Why you are interested in volunteering
- What sort of voluntary work are you interested in
- What your particular skills are
- What new skills would you like to learn through your volunteer work
- How much time you have to offer

You can ask them anything that you feel unsure about. Some questions you may ask are:

- Do they reimburse expenses?
- What training do they offer?
- What tasks you will be doing?
- Will there be someone to talk to regularly about how you are getting on?

An informal chat or interview can also give you an opportunity to look at where you will be volunteering and meet some of the other staff and volunteers

Induction

You should be given an initial induction to the organisation, a description of your volunteering activities, and an introduction to your key staff contact or co-ordinator.

Training

Training to perform your role should also be offered.

Confidentiality

Only relevant information should be requested from you. You should be told why it is needed. Anything in writing should be kept confidential.

Expenses

As a volunteer you should have all reasonable out of pocket expenses reimbursed, such as travel or mileage costs to and from your placement and any car parking costs incurred.

Treated Equally

There should be no discrimination on grounds of age, disability, race, gender, sexuality, history of illness, non-relevant criminal records, employment, financial or social status.

Health and Safety

You should not volunteer in unsafe or unhealthy conditions. The organisation you volunteer with will have a Health and Safety Policy that should be displayed or shown to you when you start your volunteering.

Support

You should have a support session with your key contact regularly – this allows time for you to decide whether your volunteering placement is right for you. It is also an opportunity for you to raise any queries, concerns or problems you may have. Support sessions should be scheduled at regular intervals.

References

You should be able to receive references on the basis of your volunteering activity.

Insurance

Volunteer should be adequately covered by the organisations they are volunteering with.

How much time do I need to volunteer for?

This is really up to you. You can volunteer at any time of the week, day or night. While much volunteering takes place in office hours, you can volunteer at evenings and weekends too, this depends on what you want to do.

Can I leave if I don't like it?

Yes you can. You are under no obligation to keep volunteering for an organisation that you are unhappy in but you should always tell the organisation you are leaving so that they do not expect you in.

It is always worth talking to somebody about this first. You can then discuss with them why you feel unhappy and what you feel would improve your time as a volunteer in the organisation.

If you feel that something is seriously wrong or someone is treating you badly it is worth checking whether they have a complaints procedure.