

Volunteer Handbook

A volunteer handbook can be an invaluable source of information to a new member of the team and can be an aid to the induction process which often involves the volunteer being given a lot of information on their first day to absorb.

Starting in a new environment can be quite challenging with lots of information and new faces to remember. It should be noted that a handbook is not a substitution for an induction.

This will contain information that will be helpful in their day-to-day work for the organisation. It is often a good idea to put yourself in the volunteers position when putting one together and ask what information would I need when starting.

What should be in the Handbook:

- Information on your organisation
- Day to day life in the organisation
- What does the organisation do and why

It is a good idea to work out what expenses you are able to afford to pay volunteers from the start. Also explain how they should claim expenses. For example, payment for a bus ticket should be done automatically on the day but you may want

volunteers to check in advance before they arrange for childcare, buy clothing or enrol on external training courses.

Claiming expenses is not a 'payment' so has no minimum wage implications or any effect on benefits.

Pay on the day.

Travel costs and food costs should be paid in cash on the day where at all possible. A day-rider bus fare can now be 10% or more of a volunteer's weekly income – just imagine spending 10% of your weekly income on a journey? How many times would you do it without getting reimbursed?

Be proactive – ask if volunteers need expenses

Volunteers on a low income may well be ashamed to ask to claim their expenses so offering to pay can help a great deal. One volunteer said:

"I don't want to ask for my expenses because everyone will look at me bad. I work hard and they should give me expenses. I don't understand, they have time to give me orders, tell me what to do – why don't they have time to give me expenses."

As a Volunteer Manager, it is your responsibility to check with volunteers that they have claimed their expenses. It may well take months for a volunteer to build up the confidence to ask for their expenses so please be proactive in offering to pay expenses.

If you build up a habit, or a culture of offering expenses then people will not feel embarrassed by claiming.

If a volunteer does not want the money, they can always donate the money back to your charity and gift aid the donation (if they are a taxpayer).

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