

Voluntary Action-**Leeds** Volunteer Induction

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INDUCTION OF VOLUNTEERS

What is 'Induction'?

As with paid staff, induction is an important stage in the recruitment process for volunteers. On a basic level, induction acts as an introduction and welcome to the organisation for the prospective volunteer and can give them a "taste of what's on offer". Induction gives organisations an opportunity to provide volunteers with further details and information needed to do the job. This may also involve explaining to volunteers the policies and practices of the organisation, clarifying any queries or potential problems, setting 'boundaries' or 'ground rules' and encouraging them to work to a set of principles - the ethos of the organisation.

Induction varies greatly from organisation to organisation. In some instances the point at which a volunteer makes initial contact with an organisation may also act as their induction, this, however, is not particularly good practice as there is little time spent on covering the wide variety of issues relating to voluntary work. So, although induction may begin at the first point of contact, this ideally is only the start of a longer process, in which volunteer and organisation get to know each other better and one that can involve training sessions, interviews etc. As noted above, this process will vary considerably depending on the nature, work, resources and/or ethos of organisations, so the remainder of this information sheet focuses on not how long induction should be but what areas should be covered.

Finally, it could also be added that effective induction will give volunteers more confidence, especially in the early stages of their work, and demonstrates that the organisation values the involvement and work of a volunteer.

What should an induction session cover?

Induction can take place with volunteers on a group basis or individually. The latter, arguably, enables worker and volunteer to get to know each other a little better, however, the group situation provides an opportunity for volunteers to meet others doing similar work. Whichever, the organisation should ideally cover the following areas in their induction: -

The Organisation:

- The 'mission statement'
- Aims and objectives
- Its history and role
- Ways of working
- Ethos
- Details on client/user group.
- Staff structure; who makes what decisions and where.
- Roles of paid staff / management committee.
- Roles of volunteers including those new to the work and those more experienced.
- Roles of others who may be involved, e.g. social workers, carers, CPNs, etc.
- 'Boundaries' of the volunteer's own role(s), including to whom they are accountable.
- Working environment of volunteers e.g. the building, whether they will be working alone or in a team etc.
- The support available for volunteers e.g. who from, in what form, frequency etc.
- Details of 'specific' support e.g. supervision, mentoring etc.
- Details of social gatherings and/or special events.

Policies, Procedures and Practicalities:

- Information on relevant and/or specific policies and procedures within the organisation.
- A copy of the Equal Opportunities policy.
- Accessibility of the building and disabled facilities.
- Special conditions e.g. no bereavement over the past two years for volunteer bereavement counsellors.
- Information on who to contact in an emergency, numbers etc. and how to go about it.
- Health and safety procedures / first aid / fire drill/panic alarms / other precautions and procedures.
- Information on how and when to claim expenses, what can be claimed **and** issues relating to benefits.
- Information and details on insurance cover.
- Details of where things are kept, how to get any keys, who has them etc.

- Details of resources and facilities available **to** volunteers (e.g. tea/coffee making facilities!).
- Information on any grievance/complaints procedure and how to access these.
- Helpful hints on how to get to where the voluntary work is e.g. bus routes etc.

Other Important Issues:

- Give details on training to be undertaken, what is involved and reasons for this.
- Guidelines on confidentiality (e.g. information on clients, other volunteers, organisations finance, disclosure of information etc.).
- Promoting the importance of Equal Opportunities and referring to the organisation's own policy.
- Guidelines on dealing with potential problems (e.g. being asked by clients to perform additional tasks).
- Guidelines on what to do if volunteers are offered money or presents by clients.
- Guidelines on any records volunteers are expected to keep.
- Discussing the purpose of 'Volunteer Agreements' and what these imply.
- Looking at **any** further issues raised by volunteers (give volunteers the opportunity to do this!).
- Confirm they understand everything, are willing to abide by the policies and feel OK about their work.
- Paperwork - 'A Welcome/Induction Pack', 'Volunteer Agreement' etc.
- Details on any assessment, monitoring, evaluation procedures (useful for organisation and volunteer).
- Promoting voluntary work as a way of gaining valuable experience for those seeking employment.
- Have an information pack detailing the issues covered in the induction.