

Volunteering Policy

Policy Statement

Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) is committed to involving volunteers safely, responsibly and effectively and to recognising and celebrating the contribution that volunteers make.

WVA strives to involve a diverse range of volunteers and to offer a variety of volunteer roles that reflect the needs of the organisation, whilst also providing opportunities for volunteers to use and develop a range of skills, knowledge and experience.

This policy outlines how WVA involves, manages and supports volunteers and the principles that underpin volunteering within the organisation.

Who this policy covers

This policy covers WVA staff and volunteers. Volunteers are also covered by other organisational policies and procedures. Volunteer roles should be considered when new policies are developed and volunteers should be listed/named as a specific category in policy documents.

Definitions

"The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering" published in 2005 (reviewed in 2009) by the Institute for Volunteering Research contains a short definition of volunteering. It states that volunteering is:

"...an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives".

The code goes on to outline four key elements which WVA will uphold and include in all of its activities.

Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity: Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Mutual benefit: Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Giving time voluntarily must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits and feels that his or her contribution is personally fulfilling.

Recognition: Explicit recognition that valuing the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and Government. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.'

Ethos of our Volunteer Programme

All staff members at WVA have a responsibility for involving volunteers in their work and for providing a level of volunteer management. Staff members are provided with support and guidance about working with volunteers and are expected to work professionally and respectfully with volunteers.

We treat volunteers with the same level of respect that we would a paid staff member, whilst recognising the need for clear distinctions between paid and voluntary roles. We see volunteers as adding value to our services rather than substituting for paid staff roles. We recognise the unique position of volunteers and the particular qualities that volunteers bring to their roles within the organisation.

We look for the best in our volunteers and aim to work with people's skills and build on strengths, rather than focussing on what someone can't do.

1. Introduction

Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) is an infrastructure organisation aiming to support the development of a vibrant, thriving and sustainable third sector to meet the diverse and changing needs of local communities.

To do this we:

- Provide information, guidance and resources enabling local voluntary, community and faith organisations to deliver effective quality services.
- Promote, support and develop volunteering for individuals and local communities to make a positive difference.
- Develop and champion excellence in volunteer management
- Initiate and nurture the development of new groups, schemes, enterprises or activities to meet identified needs.
- Support local networks and forums to facilitate and encourage effective partnerships and strengthen cross sector working.
- Enable effective representation and involvement on key strategic partnership bodies to ensure third sector organisations have a strong voice.

Warrington Voluntary Action is committed to involving volunteers directly within the organisation to:

- Allow us to offer additional services to our core work.
- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Allow people to use volunteering as a way of gaining skills and develop confidence which can be utilised in other areas.
- Provide different skills and perspectives to our work.
- Offer opportunities if we can for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded.

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers.

2. Principles

Warrington Voluntary Action:

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- Recognises that voluntary work brings mutual benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and the organisation as a whole.
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the work of WVA.
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff as part of a service which they provide.
- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- Recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.

3. Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the community, and will be in line with WVA Equality and Diversity Policy. Positive action in recruitment may be used where appropriate.

We are committed to equal opportunities and believe volunteering is open to all regardless of an individual's age, sex, marital status, ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, political beliefs, HIV/Aids status, marital status, adaptable needs or religion. Decisions are made on the basis of an individual's suitability for the role.

Specific opportunities within WVA will be created and advertised with an information pack available. Opportunities will vary in length and complexity. WVA also reserves the right to discontinue any opportunity at any time.

People interested in becoming volunteers with WVA will be invited for an informal talk with the Volunteer Engagement Officer. WVA aims to support those who show willingness and aptitude to perform the role, this support will be in the form of induction training, access to all courses supplied by WVA and partners, reviews and establishment of individual development needs.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a registration form and may need to provide two references. Where applicants are not placed in the role applied for, they will be provided with constructive feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles.

The volunteering roles offered by WVA are not likely to require a CRB check however volunteers with criminal convictions either spent or unspent will be accepted into the opportunities offered unless the conviction conflicts with the role in which they are applying for. WVA is committed to giving individuals with CRB issues a foot into volunteering. The majority of roles within WVA will not involve a CRB check

Volunteers with Learning Disabilities will be welcomed if the arrangement is mutually fulfilling. Roles can to a certain extent be adapted to suit the ability of the volunteer and elements of the opportunity can be performed where possible.

Volunteers that disclose additional issues (substance addiction, mental health or physical disability for example) will be considered on personal/individual merit. Whilst volunteering the

Volunteer Engagement Officer will support the volunteer and provide regular reviews if needed to ensure the correct level of support is being provided.

4. Volunteer Documentation

Each volunteering role will have a role description outlining their main duties and the terms of their volunteering role.

All volunteers with WVA will be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement, this document outlines a mutual promise that both sides shall uphold.

Volunteers will also be provided, if desired, with a skills record, a document outlining training received and skills gained. This record will allow the volunteer to use their time with WVA effectively as they transition into other roles. This record will also be used to identify training needs.

5. Induction and Training

Where appropriate volunteers will be given a health and safety induction and will provide them with an overview of the premises and day to day running of WVA.

Volunteers will be given induction training which will detail the work that WVA does and equip them with the full view of operations (where appropriate).

Role specific training will be provided and the appropriate tools and skills developed and training needs identified.

6. Support and development

The Volunteer Engagement Officer will provide regular support and review sessions. These will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed.

Volunteer feedback and input is wholly welcomed and volunteers will be encouraged to make suggestions about systems and processes they are involved in. Opportunities to add to their existing role and tailor said role to meet personal goals and areas of interest is actively encouraged also. The Volunteer Engagement Officer and WVA staff (where available) will assist in the development of volunteers within the organisation. Volunteers will also be fully supported whilst volunteering by a direct line manager (from within the WVA staff) who will oversee and be responsible for their work on a particular role or project.

Volunteers will be consulted in decisions which affect them. WVA is committed to developing consultation and representational procedures for volunteers. The organisation will inform volunteers on all decisions and updates affecting WVA as a whole and attention particularly drawn to those which affect them directly.

7. Records

Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the registration form, references, crisis contact, correspondence and any other relevant information in accordance with WVA confidentiality policy.

8. Expenses

WVA will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses.

Expenses will be paid for travel to and from the agreed place of volunteering on the cheapest mode of transport within reasonable distance. Proof of journey must be shown and verified by a member of staff. Mileage will be refunded at 25p per mile (plus car parking) for volunteers who are driving but otherwise bus fare.

A contribution of £2 for lunch expenses will be paid if the volunteer is present and carrying out their role for a full working day or seven hour period (whichever applies first). Proof of purchase must be returned and verified by a member of staff.

9. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the WVA insurance policy while carrying out agreed duties.

10. Health and Safety

WVA will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare while at work in accordance with the centre's Health and Safety policy.

11. Equal Opportunities

Volunteers and staff will work in accordance with the WVA equal opportunities policy and will prevent discrimination on any grounds.

12. Problems

WVA has a policy to help deal with grievances that volunteers may have. In line with this policy volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with the Volunteer Engagement Officer at any time. If the problem is with the Volunteer Engagement Officer, all grievances should be directed to the Chief Officer. If the Chief Officer is unsuitable, then the Board of Directors (via the WVA address) are the point of contact.

Below is the current postal address where complaints should be forwarded.

Warrington Voluntary Action
the Gateway
89 Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1SR
01925 246880

13. Endings

Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options. When volunteers move on from their role at WVA they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully with the Volunteer Engagement Officer

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference. References will only be provided up to six months from the end of volunteering.

WVA has a policy on how it will deal with any disciplinary issue regarding a volunteer.