



GAVCA Specimen Policy:

Volunteering Policy Development (includes confidentiality for volunteers and grievance policy for volunteers)

January 2010

Background information to support your policy development

Volunteers are an essential part of most voluntary and community work – as trustees, as front line deliverers, as administrators and as general project support.

Volunteers' legal status is covered by the National Minimum Wage Act 1998; The Job Seekers Allowance Regulations 1996 and Police Criminal records Regulations 2002.

Who should adopt the policy for the organisation?

Trustees are responsible for the adoption of this policy. The Trustees can delegate the writing of the policy.

Considerations for your organisation

- Do you have clear induction policies and a volunteer handbook?
- If volunteers are a core part of your organisation you may wish to apply for Investing in Volunteers (Volunteering England). This is the quality mark to show that your organisation values its volunteers and has all policies in place.
- Do you know about volunteers and their rights?
- Are volunteers included in your Health and Safety Policy and your public and employers liability insurance?
- Have your volunteers had a CRB check (Criminal Records Bureau) – do they need to so that they can work with you?
- Have you got young volunteers and are they protected in your organisation by your policies?
- Are you up to date with how much expenses volunteers can have and how their benefits might be affected if they receive expenses?

Changes

Check with Volunteering England for nationals beyond Europe. This is especially important if the person is trying to gain residency in the UK. Your local Asylum Seekers and Refugees organisation will know what is possible for people who are new to the country.

For more information about Volunteering

- At GAVCA we have The Voluntary Sector Legal Handbook 2009 edition for detailed legal checks. You are welcome to drop in to look at this resource. Contact Gloucester 01452 332424 and Cheltenham

01242 227737

- GAVCA also runs a three day Managing Volunteers course each year and has a specialist Volunteer Officer who can support your queries.
- www.volunteering.co.uk/resources/goodpracticebank The website for Volunteering England - everything you need for policies, writing a volunteer handbook and all aspects of working with volunteers including disciplinary methods.
- GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) info@garas.org.uk



Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action

Sample Volunteering Policy

Introduction

GAVCA exists to support and represent local voluntary action by working in partnership to promote equality and encourage diversity. In line with this mission GAVCA involves volunteers to:

- Ensure that our services meet the needs of our clients.
- Provide new skills and perspectives for the volunteers.
- Increases our contact with the local community we serve.

Principles

The volunteering policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- GAVCA will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisation.
- GAVCA volunteers are not used to replace paid staff.
- All levels of GAVCA staff are expected to work positively with volunteers.

Structure

The overall responsibility for volunteers is the Volunteer Centre Manager. The Volunteer Centre Manager is there to make sure that each volunteer is fully supported and happy. Each volunteer will be offered regular support/supervision sessions with the Volunteer Centre Manager to ensure this process. The Volunteer Centre Manager will then allocate each volunteer to an area of work and a supervisor. This may be constant or may change from week to week depending on the needs of the volunteer and or GAVCA. Each volunteer will agree a task description with their supervisor which will act as a point of reference for development in support/supervision sessions. The agreed day to day tasks will be managed by the supervisor. Volunteers always have the right to refuse demands they consider unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or which they do not have the skills to carry out

Practice Guidelines

The following guidelines deal with the practical aspects of involving volunteers at GAVCA. More detailed information, including copies of the various documents referred to, are provided in the volunteers' handbook.

Interviews and Confidentiality

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed. The purpose of this is to explore the interests of the volunteer, the skills they have to offer and how best to maximise their potential within the volunteering opportunity available. Two References will be asked for due to the importance of confidentiality within the organisation. Volunteers are also expected to sign a confidentiality document and are bound by the same confidentiality requirements as paid staff.

Volunteer Agreements

GAVCA requires all volunteers to sign a Volunteer Agreement. This is not a legally binding document but merely a written outline of what is expected of the volunteer and what GAVCA will undertake to provide for volunteers.

Expenses

GAVCA pay travel and other out of pocket expenses. Details can be found in the volunteers' handbook.

Induction and Training

All volunteers will receive an induction into GAVCA and their own area of work. Training will be provided as appropriate.

Volunteers' voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views at GAVCA on matters concerning the organisation. Their opinion will be sought concerning any changes or reviews of the organisation's procedures and they will be invited to any team Away Days and other such events.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by GAVCA's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work for GAVCA .

Health And Safety

Volunteers are covered by GAVCA's Health and Safety policy, a copy of which is in the volunteers' handbook.

Equal Opportunities

GAVCA operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers. It is important that all volunteers read and understand this document before beginning to volunteer for GAVCA as Equal Opportunity underpins all of our work and volunteers are

expected to adhere to its principles while volunteering at GAVCA. A copy is in the Volunteers' Handbook..

Problem Solving

We hope that while volunteering at GAVCA volunteers do not encounter any problems. We strive to be a happy and supportive team within the staff and the volunteers. If however problems arise we aim to identify and provide a solution at the earliest possible stage. A procedure has been drawn up for dealing with complaints either by or about volunteers. A copy of the procedure is in the Volunteers' Handbook.

Date prepared:

Prepared by:

Issue Number:



Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action

Confidentiality for Volunteers

In nearly all organisations, volunteers will have access to, and will be given, information about the agency and others and about people (service users, staff members and other volunteers).

Some agencies have policies of 'blanket confidentiality' whereby no information learnt in confidence can be disclosed without express permission. Others have policies of 'limited confidentiality' whereby they will not disclose information, except in certain circumstances.

With volunteers, and at recruitment stage, it is **essential** to be **very clear** what information can be discussed outside the organisation and what cannot. In order to do this it is vital:

1. to have a clear policy on confidentiality - establishing what can and what cannot be divulged and with whom the information can be shared.
2. to communicate this clearly to the volunteer
3. to be consistent in adhering to this policy

The implementation of a 'confidentiality form' (outlining the organisations policy and containing a statement agreeing to this which can be signed by the volunteer) can be useful - see sample form enclosed.

Training in this respect can also be useful - especially where a volunteer is new to the 'concept' of confidentiality. For example a volunteer may find guidance necessary to help deal with enquiries about their volunteering from friends and family. It may be a good idea to 'revisit' this a short period after the volunteer has started in post as they need to take in much information in the first day(s) and as it is a difficult and important concept. Overall however, there is no reason for volunteers to be considered less trustworthy than paid staff in respect of confidentiality issues as long as they are given clear guidance.

Other issues to consider:

- Sometimes, seemingly insignificant details should be considered as confidential. The address of some organisations (e.g. Women's Refuges), the finances of an agency or its staffing problems all may be considered as private matters.
- Volunteers may need extra guidance on how to deal with certain situations. For example, if they are concerned about a client's physical or mental condition or about possible abuse of a child.
- Volunteers may need guidance on how much personal information to convey to a client. Sometimes a degree of empathy is desirable, but this should be 'general' in nature and only imparted by the volunteer themselves - never by a third party.
- Volunteers should be informed and occasionally reminded that it is especially important not to give out details of staff members and other volunteers. Telephone numbers are often disclosed in this way.



Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action

Sample Grievance Procedure For Volunteers

The grievance procedure exists to resolve problems encountered by volunteers of GAVCA and is used for dealing with any complaints that you may have against other volunteers, employees, members of committees of GAVCA, or general working conditions.

If you feel you have good grounds for a grievance, you should not feel intimidated about using the procedure which exists to resolve disputes.

1. **Grievance against another volunteer or Employee**

The procedure has three stages:

Stage 1 Initially you are encouraged to raise the problem directly with the other party.

Stage 2 If you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of this first meeting, or if you wish to proceed immediately to this stage of the process, you should raise it with your supervisor and / or the volunteer manager. He/She will put her/his recommendations into writing and give a copy to you and the other party. If the grievance is with either of these persons take it to the other stated person.

Stage 3 If you are dissatisfied with these recommendations, you may request a meeting with the Chief Executive. Such request shall detail in full the nature of the Grievance and the reasons for your dissatisfaction with the decision of the Volunteer manager / supervisor. You may prior to the meeting address further comments in writing as you think fit to the Chief Executive who will transmit this information to the other party. The Chief Executive will make a final decision. If the grievance is with the Chief Executive you and have been through the 2 stages above you can take your grievance to the Chair, through the above process, the decision of the Chair will be final.

Throughout the procedure you are entitled to be represented by any other person of your choice, and should you be the party to a grievance made by another volunteer/employee you will also be entitled to be represented.

3. Grievance involving working conditions

Stage 1 You should raise this initially with the your supervisor

Stage 2 If you are dissatisfied with the response, you can take the grievance to the volunteer manager of GAVAC who will negotiate with the supervisor as how to improve the situation

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the volunteer manager you can take the grievance to the Chief Executive whose decision will be final

At all stage throughout the procedure you are entitled to be represented by your trade union or any other person of your choosing.

Any action taken under this procedure will not be recorded on your personal file unless you request this, but it shall be recorded separately and you are entitled to see a copy of this file if you are directly affected.