

## Involving Volunteers Best Practice Guide Sheet

### Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are created in relation to what volunteers will be doing and experiencing - including physical, emotional, mental factors. They:

- Identify potential risks volunteers may face and outline how these are considered, reduced or removed.
- Evidence duty of care, assessment of any potential risks and the necessary steps taken to minimise them.

### **Carrying out a risk assessment**

The health and safety executive recommends a 5-step approach to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards.
2. Who might be harmed and how.
3. For each hazard, evaluate the chance (big or small) of harm actually being done and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done.
4. Record the significant findings of your risk assessment, for example the main risks and the measures you have taken to deal with them.
5. Review your assessment from time to time (for example annually), revise if necessary.

The most straightforward way to carry out a risk assessment and record your findings is to use a risk matrix table. This helps to evaluate the likelihood and seriousness of any risks.

Carrying out a risk assessment requires a detailed knowledge of your organisation's activities. Involving staff and volunteers in the process will give you an accurate picture of your working practices. Bear in mind the risks of volunteers visiting people in their homes are very different from when in an office environment and depending on the role a DBS check may be required.

### **What can be done to minimise risk**

This can depend on the nature of the hazard:

- Including health and safety in volunteers' induction.
- Give information and training to volunteers.
- Introduce more supervision.
- Introduce different working practices.
- Use protective clothing or equipment.
- Stop the activity altogether.

### **The template**

The template will record the approaches and measures you have taken, including:

- Who might be harmed and how
- What you are already doing to control the risks
- What further action you need to take to control the risks
- Who needs to carry out the action
- When the action is needed by

[Health and Safety Executive have a simple template and some examples you can refer to](#)

There are also templates which have a scoring system to determine 1. *The likelihood of the hazard* and 2. *What level of impact the risk will have*. Community Works has an example template for you to refer to if you wanted.

### **The volunteer role involves being along in the office and/or community**

If the role means they are in the office/on site on their own during normal office hours or outside hours or are meeting people accessing your service alone in the community - you will need to consider appropriate procedures to ensure they are safe. For example:

- Agreeing as an organisation how to manage the situation
- To have the appropriate policies and procedures in place for example health and safety, safeguarding, managing inappropriate behaviour
- Leave the office door latch on
- In the office following the fire evacuation procedures
- What they must do in emergencies
- Who to contact, when and how
- What to do if the volunteer feels unsafe or threatened
- Ensuring the volunteer and relevant staff are fully familiar with the procedure
- Do they need to meet people in a public place
- Will you supply them with a mobile phone
- How to let people know they will be on their own

### **Further information available:**

[NCVO – Volunteering and health and safety](#)

[Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) – volunteers and health and safety law](#)

[The Resource Centre – Risk Assessment](#)

[HSE \(Health and Safety Executive\) has guidance on Volunteering](#)

