



# Health and Safety for Volunteers

## *Guidance Sheet No. 1 for Volunteer Involving Organisations*

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## Summary

If you work with volunteers, you will have some responsibilities regarding their health and safety. This sheet aims to give you an overview and pointers on what to think about. However, it is not by any means a complete account of such duties and responsibilities, but it should help you to think about the things you need to consider.

There are fewer legal obligations towards volunteers with regard to health and safety than for paid employees, but it is good practice to treat your volunteers with equal consideration when it comes to health and safety.

In this Information Sheet you will find:

- *'Duty of Care'*
- Health and Safety Legislation
- Basic Principles of health and safety
- Considerations when working in partnership with other organisations

**We do recommend that organisations seek further advice on all topics covered here whenever you think about taking on voluntary help.**

# The Duty of Care

'Duty of Care' in English law means that you have a responsibility to ensure you do not cause any unreasonable harm or loss to another person while they are in your care, using your services, or exposed to your activities. This can include physical, mental, or economic harm.

If this duty is breached, a legal liability may be imposed to compensate the victim for any harm they incur.

This clearly has some implications for organisations working with volunteers. Some of the activities which could create a duty of care may not be obvious, but do include some fairly common activities your volunteers might be involved with:

- Lending out equipment, such as wheelchairs or projectors
- Sponsored bike rides, or charity treks
- Organising outdoor events
- Running a charity cake stall

There are many more, so do think about whether your activities create a duty of care.

# Health and Safety Legislation

The main legislation covering health and safety in the UK is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The body responsible for enforcement of this is the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). If your organisation has one or more employees working under a contract of employment you will be affected by this Act, and this includes charities and voluntary groups.

The Act explains the duties that you have towards your employees, volunteers, and also members of the public. You must ensure the health and safety of employees and volunteers, and this includes providing information, and where appropriate, protective clothing.

Depending on what your charity or group does, you may also need to carry out risk assessments. This process will help you to identify what risks could be encountered during a specific activity or situation. You then need to set out what you will do to mitigate that risk. This could include provision of training, altering a working method, providing protective clothing or changing the activity. Obviously some activities are higher or lower risk than others and you should bear this in mind when writing your risk assessments. For example, a volunteer who is manning an information stand will have a very different risk assessment from one who is volunteering at a care home.

Risk assessments may be for individual activities, such as mowing a lawn, or for locations, such as an office. Examples of risk assessments are shown on the next pages.

## Organisations with responsibility for buildings and premises

If you have responsibility for any premises, whether owned by you or not, you must ensure that the building is safe to use and meets all the relevant health and safety regulations (for example, ensuring you have appropriate signage around fire exits, first aid, etc to meet the Health and Safety (signs and signals) Regulations 1996). This would apply to your charity headquarters, but could also apply to village

# Health & Safety for Volunteers

Site Risk Assessment	
Name/Location of Site	
Descriptions of activities to be undertaken	
Number of children present	
Age of children	
Number of adults present	
Person in charge of activities	
Hazards and risk level  (Hazard = anything that can cause harm)  (Risk = the chance, high, low or medium, that someone will be harmed by the hazard)	
Action taken to eliminate/control hazards	
Review date	
Signed dated	

Role	Risk Factor	Risk Likelihood L - M - H	Risk Impact L - M - H	Control Procedure to limit risk	Responsibility
Administration / Receptionist	Eye strain from monitor.	L	L-M	Recommend rests from the screen every 40 minutes	Supervisors / Administrator. All staff should take responsibility checking on volunteers.
	Repetitive strain injury	L	L-M	Rest hands holding them down to the side every 40 minutes	
	Abuse or assault	L-M	M-H	Recommend that if concerned volunteer to leave reception area and lock kitchen door	

# Health & Safety for Volunteers

NURSING HOME.  
**RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SAFE LIFTING AND HANDLING.**  
 NAME  DATE

Handling Techniques (a) Supervision (b) Australian (c) Through Arm (d) Two Sling (e) Cross Arm (f) Thumb Hold (g) A Rocking Transfer

General condition of patient	Assessment of patient. High/Low	Can we reduce the risk?	Task undertaken	Assessment for each task.	Equipment available.
Weight <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Use a mobile hoist. <input type="text"/>	Turning and lifting in bed.	Aids <input type="text"/> Staff numbers <input type="text"/> Handling techniques. <input type="text"/>	Mobile hoist for lifting patients off the floor. <input type="text"/>
Height <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Nurses height. <input type="text"/>	Transfer bed to chair / commode	Aids <input type="text"/> Staff numbers <input type="text"/> Handling techniques. <input type="text"/>	Blue lifting slings. <input type="text"/>
Psychological <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Motivated <input type="text"/> Confused <input type="text"/> Dementia. <input type="text"/>	Transfer chair to toilet / bath hoist	Aids <input type="text"/> Staff numbers <input type="text"/> Handling techniques. <input type="text"/>	Do not use relatives to help. <input type="text"/>
Catheter / objects. <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Plan before starting to lift. <input type="text"/>	Bathroom to be used.	Bath hoist Yes / No <input type="text"/>	Always use two people when lifting. <input type="text"/>
Physical illness <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Patients diagnosis <input type="text"/>	Other handling problems <input type="text"/>		
Environment <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Rearrange the room before lifting if necessary. <input type="text"/>	<b>BASIC RULES.</b>  KNOW YOUR PATIENT.,   FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS <input type="text"/>	ADVICE FOR LIFTING AND HANDLING  IF IN DOUBT ASK.	HAVE YOU BEEN TRAINED IN LIFTING AND HANDLING? IF NOT IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.  IF A PATIENT STARTS TO FALL TO THE GROUND LOWER THEM SLOWLY.
Noise <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Switch music off if necessary. Use hearing aids. <input type="text"/>			
Mobility <input type="text"/>	High/Low	Encourage mobility. <input type="text"/>			

DATE FOR REASSESSMENT.   
 SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS.

SIGNED

## Risk Assessment Form

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Of Last Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_ (Responsible Person) Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Name Of Assessor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Of Next Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	HAZARDS	EXISTING PRECAUTIONS	OK / NOK	DEFICIENCIES	HAZARD SEVERITY	RISK	EXTENT	RISK SEVERITY

As you can see, risk assessments vary widely, but these examples should help to give you some guidance to develop a form and system suitable for your organisation and activities.

# Basic principles of health and safety

There are a number of key areas you will need to think about when considering provision of basic health and safety. This could be different depending on whether you have paid staff and volunteers, or volunteers only. The table below shows each area and what the differences are.

<b>Organisations with paid staff and volunteers</b>	<b>Volunteer only organisations</b>
<b>Key area 1: Committing to good health and safety practice</b>	
If you have paid staff, your duties are set out by law in the Health and Safety at Work Act.	If you have no employees, you do not have quite the same legal duties. However, it is good practice for you to use the same health and safety standards for your volunteers as you would if they were paid staff. This demonstrates to your volunteers and to others the value and importance you place on your volunteers and their contribution to your organisation.
<b>Key area 2: Health and Safety Policy</b>	
If you are a small organisation with less than five paid staff, you do not have to have a written Health and Safety Policy. However, it is good practice to do so, and for you to include your volunteers in this policy. You can visit the HSE website to see examples of policies you could use as a template.	If you have no employees, your organisation does not have to have a written health and safety policy. However, we advise that you consider putting one in place so you can ensure your volunteers understand the procedures and responsibilities involved.

## Basic principles of health and safety (continued)

<b>Organisations with paid staff and volunteers</b>	<b>Volunteer only organisations</b>
<b>Key area 3: Health, safety and welfare</b>	
<p>You must make sure that the places where staff and volunteers work is clean and as safe as possible from any risk of ill health or injury. Where appropriate you should implement safe systems of working, such as if you need to handle machinery. You must also provide proper training and information for people to do their work safely, and provide proper supervision where needed.</p>	<p>If you have no paid staff this does not apply, however, you must make sure your volunteers are working in a safe environment where any risk to their health or welfare is minimised.</p>
<b>Key area 4: Risk Assessment</b>	
<p>Risk assessments should involve everyone who takes part in the activities being risk assessed. This includes employees and volunteers. This will ensure that all potential risks and ways to minimise those risks can be identified.</p>	<p>If you have only volunteers and no paid staff you do not legally have to carry out risk assessments, but it is good practice to do them anyway, as it will help you to understand any potential problems and identify them before they become serious issues.</p>

## Basic principles of health and safety (continued)

<b>Organisations with paid staff and volunteers</b>	<b>Volunteer only organisations</b>
<b>Key area 5: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)</b>	
<p>If you have paid staff you must identify any hazardous substances which could cause harm in your workplace . This not only applies if you are working with chemicals, but also includes everyday items such as the contents of your cleaning cupboard. You should maintain a register of the COSHH sheet for these items - these can usually be found on the manufacturer's website - and have a procedure for dealing with any incidents.</p>	<p>Again, volunteer only groups are not legally required to do a COSHH assessment but it is advisable for one to be carried out as a matter of good practice, in order to meet your duty of care and to demonstrate your commitment to the welfare of your volunteers.</p>
<b>Key area 6: Fire Safety and Risk Assessment</b>	
<p>Any building where the public or community can enter, including your workplace, has to meet minimum fire safety standards, whether you have paid staff or not. Your local fire service will advise you further on what you need to do.</p>	
<b>Key area 7: Registering your organisation's activities</b>	
<p>If you have paid staff you must register your existence with the HSE or local authority environmental health department.</p>	<p>Volunteer only organisations do not normally have to register unless you: carry out any dangerous activities, (e.g. a fire-works display); have responsibility for a building, when you have to register with the fire authority; or you are involved with supplying food on a regular basis, when you must register with the local environmental health department.</p>

# Basic principles of health and safety (continued)

Organisations with paid staff and volunteers	Volunteer only organisations
<b>Key area 8: First Aid</b>	
<p>If you have paid staff you are legally bound to do a first aid assessment. What is comprised will be dependent on what your activities are, as some organisations will need greater first aid provision than others. However the minimum you must have is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One first aid box</li><li>• A notice that tells people where it is kept, who the designated first aider or appointed person is, and where they can be contacted.</li></ul> <p>You may not need a fully qualified first aider but you will need an appointed person. This is someone who has had some basic first aid training from a reputable provider such as St John's Ambulance or Red Cross. Other providers are available and the HSE should be able to tell you who they are.</p>	<p>If you only have volunteers and no paid staff you do not have to do a first aid assessment, but it is recommended that you do so anyway and that you also have at least one person who has had some first aid training.</p> <p>In addition, you may undertake some activities where having first aid provision would be highly recommended to comply with your duty of care. For example, if you were to hold a public event, you should always provide some first aid cover.</p>

# Working with other organisations

There are a number of things to consider if you undertake any activities with other organisations. Do not assume the other party has taken responsibility for health and safety but discuss it together to agree who has responsibility for what, and to make sure both your policies can be easily covered.

Below are some of the key things you should consider when working with other organisations.

- Who will have the overall responsibility for health and safety?
- How will the procedures and policies be carried out?
- What will you do in the case of any issues?
- How will you make sure staff and volunteers from both organisations understand what their duties around health and safety are?
- How can people raise concerns about health and safety?
- Who and how will a recording system be implemented - do you have an accident reporting procedure, do you know when an accident must be reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013)?

# Further Information

Health and Safety Executive

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

For more information about all aspects of health and safety.

## Disclaimer

We try hard to make sure that the information contained in our Guidance Sheets is correct when we produce them. However, please be aware that they are intended as a starting point to help you to think about the topics covered, and help you to plan your work with volunteers.

You should always look for further information or professional guidance where necessary. VCSPD are unable to accept liability for any loss or damage or inconvenience arising as a consequence of the use of this information.