

## **The Volunteer Centre considers the following to be essential elements of good volunteering practice:**

1. Volunteering must be voluntary - coercion or pressure negates the essential opt-in element of volunteering.
2. Volunteers must not be exploited. Organisations should ask when defining a volunteer role - what is the volunteer getting out of this? There must be a balance between the benefit to the volunteer and the benefit to your organisation.
3. You should not refuse to take on volunteers because of convictions or previous mental health problems or disability. You should make your decision based on an assessment of risk and relevance.
4. Volunteers must be insured. This is often covered by your Employers Liability policy, but some insurance companies insist on being told about numbers or names of volunteers
5. Relevant training is necessary, and should be based around the volunteer Task Description and requirements of the specific role.
6. Volunteers travel expenses should be covered and if people volunteer for more than 4 hours per day, also their lunch or evening meal expenses. Where possible childcare costs should be paid. If a volunteer is disabled they may have extra travel costs (e.g. taxi fare) which should be paid. Expenses should be paid promptly and if necessary in advance.
7. Volunteers should know what their duties are, who they are accountable to or who supervises them and what special responsibilities they have (e.g. regarding confidentiality). In practical terms, this means you should ensure that each volunteer has a Task Description, ensure that they are recruited and inducted properly, and hold regular review, or supervision meetings.
8. It's also a good idea to have a 'Volunteer Compact' which all volunteers sign at induction. The 'Compact' will spell out what the organisation expects of the volunteer, and what the volunteer should expect from the organisation. Sample forms for all these activities are on the VCWF website.
9. Volunteers must have access to a grievance procedure, preferably the same one which applies to staff.
10. Similarly, there should be a disciplinary process in place, but this can be less complex than that which applies to paid staff.
11. Volunteers should be recruited and treated fairly and according to the principles of diversity and equality of opportunity.

12. Volunteers do not have the same legal rights and statutory protection as an employee, but they should still be treated as a part of the organisation and their contribution should be valued.
13. Volunteers should be asked for feedback on their volunteering experience and involved in organisation wide consultations, particularly if these relate to volunteering.
14. Volunteers do not receive a financial reward but remember to involve & reward them in other ways. This can involve: regular feedback sessions about their contribution; peer support meetings; accreditation & references when they leave; appropriate training; providing personal development opportunities; getting feedback via supervisions, questionnaires, newsletters and informal chats.