



Engage MAT

Recruiting and managing volunteers

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1. Introduction

Volunteers are a welcome resource for helping to raise children’s achievements, complementing the work of teachers and support staff. This document will provide guidance on the deployment of volunteers to help ensure that schools/academies prevent people who pose a risk of harm working with children. Different guidance may apply for occasional or one-off volunteers, where this is the case it will be made clear.

The DfE document ‘Keeping children safe in education’ places a responsibility on governing bodies and proprietors to ensure all staff who work with children undergo statutory checks to prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children. Schools/academies must ensure volunteers are appropriately supervised and can also decide to ask for checks beyond what is required.

Headteachers/Principals should also ensure that no volunteer replaces paid staff or takes on work normally given to a paid member of staff.

2. Recruitment of Volunteers

For some types of voluntary work the recruitment process can be very informal. However, because the volunteer role in a school/academy, in most cases, have some degree of responsibility (e.g. working with pupils), selection processes need to be robust to ensure only the right volunteers are recruited. The school/academy will need to satisfy themselves that the volunteer is of good character. It is recommended that the recruitment process should include the following:-

- application form - any gaps or anomalies should be explored at interview.
- two satisfactory references - requests for references should include asking for details on the prospective volunteer’s behaviour and interaction with children and young people

- interview – the Headteacher/Principal (or staff member with delegated authority) or intended supervisor should meet with the volunteer for a discussion of the proposed role, its requirements and expectations
- DBS checks - an enhanced DBS check with barred list check is required for all volunteers who will have regular and unsupervised access to children as they will be considered to be undertaking a regulated activity. Where the volunteer is supervised to a reasonable level, an Enhanced DBS check can be undertaken but it is not required by law as they will not be considered to be in a regulated activity. However, schools/academies will need to be able to evidence their decision making in terms of the level of supervision a volunteer has where it is deemed not necessary to undertake the check. For further information regarding volunteers and DBS checks see *DBS checks model policy P112*, on HR InfoSpace.
- verification of the volunteer's identity and where relevant, verification of qualifications and professional status
- Childcare (disqualification) regulations 2009 declaration – The same criteria apply to volunteers as employees in terms of who should be checked. Any information provided by volunteers or prospective volunteers should be assessed in line with the guidance issued in relation to employees. See *Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations guidance G112b* on HR InfoSpace for further information.
- equality of opportunity - school/academies have responsibility for applying their policy on equal opportunities to avoid unlawful discrimination

The Headteacher/Principal will be responsible for ensuring these checks have been completed where they are appropriate. Evidence of all volunteer recruitment should be recorded on the school/academy's single central record.

Where a one-off or occasional volunteering opportunity arises, for example where a school/academy approaches a parent who is well known to the school/academy to take on a particular role, a streamlined procedure can be adopted - seeking references, checking to ensure others in the school/academy community know of no concerns and can make a positive recommendation, and conducting an informal interview to gauge the person's aptitude and suitability.

3. Management of volunteers

The monitoring of volunteers continues beyond recruitment. Volunteers should have a planned induction. Safeguarding protocols and monitoring of performance are both important and will be ongoing whilst the volunteer is volunteering in the school/academy.

All volunteers should have a named supervisor who shall be responsible for:

- ensuring the volunteer understands their volunteering role by outlining specific and general tasks, responsibilities and who they will report to.

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- organising a planned induction to the school/academy, including explaining relevant policies and procedures (including safeguarding, safer working practice/ the Code of Conduct, Health and safety, data protection, sickness absence reporting) and the duties and tasks agreed.
- ensuring that volunteers are aware of their agreed responsibilities with regards to confidentiality and relations with the media
- ensuring that volunteers have adequate work space, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely including personal identification where appropriate
- arranging a short trial period during which volunteers will receive close support and mutual feedback, including the chance for them to feedback their views
providing regular support
- making sure that the volunteer, their role and activities are reviewed and monitored
organising appropriate training to make sure that volunteers can carry out their activities effectively. This training must directly relate to the activity for which they volunteer

One off or occasional volunteers should be made aware who to report to and who they will be supervised by. They should also fully understand what is expected of them, be briefed on safeguarding protocols, health and safety and safer working practices and how to safely access any equipment or services required.

3.1 Conduct, monitoring performance and complaints

Volunteers will not be subject to school/academy disciplinary procedures nor have access to the school/academy's' grievance procedures as these are for school/academy employees only. However, volunteers will be given an opportunity to discuss any concerns that they may have about their volunteering and consult with the school/academy generally.

Volunteers should raise any complaints or concerns with their supervisor. If this is not appropriate or they are not happy with how this is dealt with, volunteers should take their complaint to the Headteacher/Principal or follow the School/academy's complaints procedure.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, their supervisor should investigate. This should include talking with the volunteer concerned.

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer should be informed that they will be offered additional support for an identified period of time. The object of the support will be to encourage improvement.

If a volunteer does not meet the school/academy's standards of performance, and the steps the school/academy has taken to encourage them to improve, do not work, the volunteer should be offered more suitable alternative voluntary activities or asked to leave with one week's notice.

If behaviour, which in the school/academy's view is, equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately.

In the event of conduct concerns and doubt as to the procedures to follow please contact Educator Solutions HR Services on 01603 307760 or HRenquiry@educatorsolutions.org.uk

4. Ending involvement

Either the school/academy or the volunteer can end the volunteering at any time and without any notice. However, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, the school/academy should usually try to give volunteers at least 2 weeks' notice.

In all cases the school/academy should provide the volunteer with details of the reasons why their involvement is no longer needed.

If asked, the school/academy should provide volunteers with a certificate giving details of all the activities that they have successfully undertaken for the school/academy.

5. Health and safety

The school/academy has a duty to look after the safety and well being of volunteers. Please see the Trust's **Recruiting Volunteers Compliance Code** which provides information on what health and safety considerations need to be addressed.

6. Repaying volunteers their expenses

Whilst unpaid, volunteering shouldn't leave volunteers out of pocket. Therefore it is good practice to reimburse a volunteer for the expenses they incur while working for the school/academy. However, schools/academies need to exercise caution when it comes to refunds. Paying 'expenses' automatically, without justification, can be seen in tribunals and by HM Revenue and Customs as the equivalent of paying a salary and could therefore potentially give volunteers employment rights, have tax implications for the school/academy and affect a volunteer's benefit claim (if applicable). The safest course is to reimburse only actual expenses, preferably against receipts.

Individual arrangements and procedures for claiming should be explained to volunteers before they start their volunteering activity. When claiming volunteers should attach corresponding receipts and/or travel tickets or other evidence of the actual expenditure incurred.

7. Insurance

Schools/academies must ensure that their insurance covers all volunteer activities carried out for the school/academy. This is likely to be covered under the school/academy's public liability insurance as long as:

- volunteers were acting within their authority at the time of the incident giving rise to the claim,
- the school/academy would have been covered for the claim had the claim been made against them,
- Where NCC organises the insurance, it has full conduct and control of any claim

8. Data protection act and Freedom of Information act

Any personal information held regarding volunteers should be stored and used only in compliance with data protection law. Volunteers should be made aware that information produced by them in the course of their volunteering may be made available to the public under the Freedom of information act 2000.

Appendix 1 – Recruiting Volunteers Compliance Code

1. Introduction

This document provides guidance on the health and safety considerations necessary when recruiting and managing volunteers.

2. Scope

This compliance code also covers the use of external charitable organisations to deliver services on a school's behalf.

3. Responsibilities

All managers and employees should follow the procedures outlined in this Code in order to carry out their duties as outlined in your school health and safety policy.

4. Volunteers' health and safety responsibilities

Volunteers cannot be considered as employees as they are not subject to a contract of employment. You do however have a duty of care to ensure volunteers are performing their role safely. You also have legal obligations to ensure the health and safety of those affected by your undertakings are met.

5. External agencies/organisations providing volunteers

External agencies/organisations will have a duty of care to volunteers they are recruiting and nominating for service. The precise nature of this will depend on the terms/conditions agreed with the school. The expectation of who will retain what responsibilities for the volunteers needs to be clear from the outset.

Where external agencies are commissioned to deliver volunteer services, the health and safety considerations will be similar to when commissioning any other service and so the [Procurement and Commissioning Compliance Code \(P605\)](#) should be followed.

6. Determining the number of volunteers needed

This will require consideration of a number of practical areas including:

- Number of staff needed to perform the required function/tasks
- Ratios of paid to volunteer staff i.e. what the ratio ('mix') of employed staff to volunteers will be and how many experienced/competent employed staff will need to be available to mentor and manage volunteers
- Proximity of volunteers to management staff, e.g. will the volunteer activities be directly overseen by an employed staff member or will they work at arm's length?
- Volunteer time/hours needing to be filled
- The minimum levels of cover needed to ensure the service can continue to operate (including instigating any safety protocols such as the fire evacuation plan) needs to be established.

You may determine certain tasks should only be performed by your own staff, e.g. operation of evac chairs, and that a minimum number of your own staff need to be present on site. Similarly, there may be certain tasks you decide it would be unreasonable for volunteers to perform, e.g. attending alarm call outs.

7. Ensuring relevant training is provided

Volunteers must be provided with any necessary information, instruction and training to understand the risks associated with - and to safely perform - their role.

As a minimum, a basic induction should be carried out to include the key findings of any risk assessments relevant to their role. They will also need information on any local arrangements and emergency procedures such as for lone working, fire evacuation and reporting damage to asbestos containing materials.

8. Risk assessments of volunteer activities

Risk assessments should be in place for volunteer activities as they would be for your own staff. In most cases where the activity being performed is the same, the findings (risks and controls) will be the same.

9. Providing a safe environment in which to volunteer

Where volunteers are carrying out their role in or on a normal work site, their health and safety is likely to be ensured by maintaining the general premises/site management arrangements in place to protect paid staff and any visitors.

In most situations, the premises/site manager role will continue to be performed by a paid employee. However, if you expect the premises to be run at certain times or wholly by a volunteer, it is essential the premises management responsibilities are properly outlined and there are effective monitoring arrangements in place to ensure these are being properly undertaken.

10. Pre-employment and health surveillance requirements

Your risk assessment of the proposed volunteer role should consider whether pre-employment health checks or ongoing health surveillance might be needed.

10.1 Pre-employment health checks

For most roles it will be reasonable to request that the volunteer provides as part of the volunteer agreement, information on any health conditions that may affect their ability to safely perform their volunteer role.

A risk assessment should help identify particular roles where pre-employment health checks are advisable. This will be needed where the volunteer activity may potentially pose a significant risk, e.g. if it involves operating plant or machinery. Consider: Can they perform the role without risk to their health? Do they have any medical conditions that may prevent them carrying out the role safely? Do they require any modifications to the role/workplace?

Pre-employment health assessments are also an opportunity to undertake a baseline check on the health of volunteers who may be exposed to a potentially significant hazard during their volunteer work.

10.2 Health surveillance

Certain activities might expose individuals to physical agents (e.g. noise and vibration) or substances where health surveillance might be needed. Typically, this might involve a low level questionnaire to check for symptoms of a particular condition, e.g. when checking for symptoms of hand arm vibration in staff using vibrating tools. Further information is available in the [Health Surveillance pages on HR InfoSpace](#).

11. Deciding what level of monitoring is needed

Proactive monitoring arrangements should be in place to help ensure incidents do not occur. Precisely how much and the type will depend on a number of different factors. For example; have you received any negative feedback that the volunteer is working in an unsafe manner? Are they involved in any high risk activities and/or environment?

Examples of active health and safety monitoring might include:

- Observation of the workplace
- Discussions or 1-2-1s

12. Addressing poor health and safety performance

If it becomes evident a volunteer's performance is not satisfactory, action should be taken. This should begin with discussions with the volunteer to consider how any issues could be addressed e.g. by temporarily amending their duties.