



4.0 Volunteers

Risk Assessment - Volunteers Based at Home

Overview

1. Introduction
2. Risk Assessing
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4. Further Information

This information sheet outlines the considerations your organisation should make if volunteers are based at home.

Introduction

Most health and safety legislation applies only to paid workers. But your organisation does have a duty of care towards volunteers (and others).

This means that you need to avoid carelessly causing harm or injury to volunteers. It does not mean that volunteers will be volunteering in a risk-free environment as it is not possible to prevent all risk.

It is important that volunteers receive the relevant information on the factors that may affect their health and safety so that they are aware of the risks and how they are to be managed.



Image: Person at a desk volunteering

Implications for Volunteers Who Volunteer Mainly From Their Own Home

1. Check out Your Insurance Cover

- Does it include cover for volunteering from home?
- Are there any requirements or exclusions which you need to be aware of?

2. Risk Assessing

Consider the nature of the tasks to be undertaken by the volunteer at home e.g. making telephone calls, computer-based tasks, practical tasks and the risk factors or hazards that may arise from them.

Potential hazards could include for example, **stress** whilst providing support over the phone, which may be emotionally demanding, and the **use of display screens** and equipment required for the role.



External Link

An sample form for carrying out a risk assessment can be found here

[Sample Risk Assessment form](#)

The Following Six Steps to Effective Risk Management:

Step One

Identify the hazards or risks that can arise from each of the tasks to be carried out.

Step Two

Decide who might be harmed and how.

Step Three

Evaluate the risks and decide one precautions needed to mitigate risk.

Step Four

Record your significant findings and put measures in place.

Step Five

Review your assessment and update if necessary.

Step Six

Learn from incidents that occur - this is a key factor in effective risk assessment.

When evaluating risk, it's important to determine how serious the risk of harm is and how likely it is to occur – this will influence your priorities and how feasible it is to manage the identified risk.

For example, if you have identified life-threatening risks, these need to be addressed, whatever the expense or inconvenience on your part, as a matter of priority over identified low level risks which are unlikely to occur. Keeping the situation under review is important to ensure effective risk management.



Some further areas of possible risk for you to consider are suggested in appendix one of information sheet:

4.8 Keeping Volunteers Safe

3. Conducting Further Assessment

One or more of the following approaches may be taken:

Discussions With the Volunteer

Having identified risks, it's important to share this information with the volunteer. Using a list of the main risks which are of concern to you, discuss with the volunteer to further assess risks, as appropriate, and how they are to be managed.

Some of the risks you may have identified can be controlled by induction training or through the provision of safety equipment, for example. The purpose of this discussion is to gather further relevant information about the environment in which the volunteer will be situated or the volunteer's specific knowledge or capabilities which could be factors in mitigating risk.

From your discussion, you should be able to better identify what actions need to be taken in order to reduce or manage risks. Make a note of actions taken.

Train Your Volunteer to Risk Assess

Volunteers could be trained to carry out their own risk assessment, perhaps using a checklist which you have devised for their role.

It would be important that you see and discuss the completed assessment and ensure that appropriate actions are both noted and followed through.

Conduct Your Own Assessment in the Volunteer's Home

There might be circumstances when this is appropriate – for example, to check whether equipment fits or is set up correctly. You may be visiting the volunteer in their home for other purposes and be able to observe for yourself, for example, the volunteering environment and equipment.

Again, it will be useful to prepare a checklist to record your findings and to note what action is taken.

Bear in mind that it could be regarded as an invasion of privacy to carry out a risk assessment within a volunteer's home without good reason. It could be discussed in the context of one to one review or supervision sessions with the volunteer.

4. Review and Update Your Risk Assessment Regularly

The process should be a continuous one. What you learn through the experience of risk assessment should inform the content of your induction training/volunteer handbook and your description of volunteer roles. It should be a meaningful process that demonstrates your care for volunteers – not just a bureaucratic procedure that is designed to ‘cover your organisation’s back’.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

There are responsibilities laid upon the employer towards people who are not employees, who may be affected by the employer’s activities - such as volunteers, and members of the public:

‘...to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health and safety’

‘...to give persons (not being his employees) who may be affected by the way in which he conducts his undertaking the prescribed information about such aspects of the way in which he conducts his undertaking as might affect their health or safety’



External Link

You can read the Health and Safety at Work Act in full on the government legislation website
[Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)

Further Information

Health and Safety Executive

Health and Safety Executive

www.hse.gov.uk

Lone Volunteering Guidance

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm>

Guidance for Home Volunteering

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Checklist

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.htm>

Investing in Volunteers - Standard

Investing in Volunteers

<https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/download-the-standard>

Additional Information Sheets

Third Sector Support Wales

4.8 Keeping Volunteers Safe



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.