



5. Risk assessment of volunteering roles

Organisations have a duty of care towards their volunteers. You have a legal responsibility to assess and address any risk to the health and safety of your employees and others, including volunteers. Effective risk assessments will help determine the potential risks and any control measures needed to minimise the outcome of any risk. It will also demonstrate your commitment to offering volunteers a safe experience.

What do I assess?

You will need to risk assess your volunteering roles to explore what may be the potential risks of the various tasks a volunteer does as part of the role. For example, if a role involves lone working there are risks that need to be addressed.

You will also need to risk-assess the suitability of a volunteer for the role and your organisation. For example, if the volunteer has a criminal record, you will need to assess if he/she is suitable for the role they have applied for.

How do I carry out a risk assessment?

[HSE](#) recommends the following approach to risk assessment which can be used with regards to your volunteering offer:

- **Identify** the potential hazards or risks that can arise from each of the tasks that are involved in a volunteering role
- **Assess** the level of risk by exploring how likely it is that someone (volunteer/service

user/public) could be harmed and how serious it could be

- **Control the risks** by identifying and putting in place things (reasonably practicable) that can be done to protect people from harm
- **Record the findings** of the assessment; the main risks and the measures taken to deal with them (note: legally if you employ 5 or more people, you must record your significant findings)
- **Review** your assessment and update if necessary

What types of risks are associated with involving volunteer?

Here are some examples of risks associated with a volunteering programme:

- Risks to your organisation's reputation- for example by a volunteer giving inappropriate advice thereby leading to harm to a service user
- Risks to the volunteers – for example if the role involves lone working or lack of training when

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the role involves using tools such as in a kitchen environment

- Risks to service users – for example if a volunteer breaches confidential information

What do I do with a risk assessment?

- Ensure that all the relevant people are aware of the risks and the controls put in place
- Share this information with the volunteer as part of the induction process
- Make sure volunteers have all the relevant training and any protective equipment needed

- Discuss and review with the volunteers if further steps are needed to mitigate risks
- Review and update regularly

We are a volunteer only organisation, do we need a risk assessment?

Voluntary groups with no employees do not legally require one but you should consider doing them to meet your duty of care. This will help to minimise risks to your volunteers and evidence your commitment to the volunteers. It can also potentially help with any insurance criteria should they occur.

This information sheet is part of a toolkit of resources for involving volunteers. For further advice and support on volunteering, including accessing our volunteer brokerage service, please contact us.



**volunteering
academy**

Middlesbrough Volunteer Centre

www.mvda.info/volunteering

Tel: 01642 803613

Email: hello@volunteeringacademy.org.uk

