



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK TEMPLATE

CONTENTS

What should be in a Volunteer Handbook?

This depends on your organisation. Put yourself in the place of a volunteer. What information would you need to know to feel part of an organisation? It might be useful to ask existing volunteers what information would have been helpful when they started. Think of the handbook as a back up to the induction process.

Here are some suggestions below of the types of content you could consider:

Welcome to Spark

Induction

Rights & Responsibilities of a Volunteer

Day to day life at Spark

Benefits

Insurance

Expenses

Equal Opportunities

Volunteer Disciplinary Procedure

Health & Safety

Confidentiality

Volunteer Agreement

WELCOME TO SPARK

Volunteers want to know all about you

They want to have an understanding of what they are doing – and how they are helping. They need to understand what your organisation does and what you are aiming to make a difference. Use this section to ‘sell’ yourselves! You may want to keep it really simple and just talk about what you do and why, or you may wish to have more information here about the organisational structure, the trustees, how charities work etc.

Spark is the new name for the Voluntary Sector Support service, following the merger of SSVCA and MCS. Together, we have been providing practical support to the voluntary sector in Somerset for many years.

We provide information, advice, training and support to the voluntary and community sector in South Somerset, Mendip and Sedgemoor. We also run the Volunteer Service, inspiring people to get involved and make a difference in their communities.

“Spark have signposted volunteers to us, provided mentoring, chaired meetings to offer advice or guidance, and promoted our work at various functions. They’ve even got us national coverage in the printed press through their extensive social networking! This barely touches on the help they’ve provided over the years too.

On top of being a valuable resource, the team have proven themselves to be personable and friendly. There is a genuineness to their ‘want to help’ that is quite rare. Their service is invaluable and one we can’t recommend enough.”

The WATCH Project

Thank you for becoming a volunteer with Spark. Volunteering is a great way to enable you to share your skills with others. It can benefit many people, not least the volunteer. You can learn new skills and gain new experiences. We hope your time with us will be satisfying and rewarding.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with guidance and assistance enabling you to get the most from volunteering with Spark. It includes reference to our policies and procedures; the full documents are available in the office. This Volunteer Handbook is freely accessible to all. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

INDUCTION

All volunteers are entitled to a full induction. This will include:

- The role and task description of the volunteer
- Name of supervisor
- Introductions to staff members and other volunteers
- Tour of the building
- Organisation rules i.e. timekeeping, appearance, conduct.
- Access to full policies and procedures.

Volunteers should also have access to ongoing training, as required by their specific role.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

This section should be based on the existing culture already within your organisation and should reflect, in the main, the rights and responsibilities enjoyed by paid staff. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Rights

- To have someone to talk to about work and to receive adequate supervision
- To be appreciated
- To know what is expected
- To be able to say no
- To know what your rights are if things go wrong
- Not to be out of pocket
- To have safe working conditions
- To take part in the organisation
- To enjoy the benefits of professional/personal development
- To be free from discrimination

Responsibilities

- To be reliable
- To respect the aims and values of Spark
- To be honest if there are any problems
- To attend training, supervision and support sessions
- To respect confidentiality
- To confirm with your car insurance company regarding cover for working as a volunteer.

DAY TO DAY LIFE AT SPARK

The handbook is the place to include information that will make things easier for volunteers. Here are some examples to consider below:

- The kitchen can be found at the end of the corridor. Tea and coffee can be found in the marked cupboard and milk in the right hand fridge.
- Toilets can be found along the corridor and to the left.
- Please do not park immediately in front of the entrance. There is a car park for volunteers and permits are available on request from the Manager.
- Announcements are posted on the noticeboard outside the main door.
- Password for the WiFi is:
- Volunteer meetings take place on the first Monday of every month at 10am.

BENEFITS

If you are claiming benefits, Spark advises you to inform your local Job Centre of any volunteering you are involved in. You should be allowed and encouraged to carry out voluntary work when seeking employment so if you have any problems please speak to us.

INSURANCE

Look at the details of your own policy before completing this section to ensure you have adequate cover. Also consider the different types of volunteer you have and whether specific insurance is required.

The organisation has a valid insurance policy which covers all our volunteers and the tasks they carry out. Failure to follow your task description may result in you not being covered by our insurance. If you are ever in doubt as to whether you are covered by our insurance please contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Drivers

If you drive for Spark you will need to provide your line manager with copies of your:

- Driving Licence
- MOT
- Tax Disc
- Insurance

Spark does not provide cover for a volunteer's own vehicle. You will need to inform your insurance company that you are using your own car in a voluntary capacity. You should not be penalised for this.

EXPENSES

Your volunteer policy might say that you reimburse out-of-pocket expenses – its good practice to do so. Make sure you advise volunteers which expenses are considered reasonable.

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteering. All reasonable out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed. Expenses not directly attributable to the organisation's business i.e. parking fines, speeding fines etc. will not be reimbursed.

In order to claim expenses an expenses claim form must be completed (all receipts should be attached) and given to your Line Manager for authorisation and payment.

If you are claiming benefits it is advisable to inform the benefits agency of the expenses you are claiming. However as they are out of pocket expenses and not payment they should not affect your benefit.

You might then use the Handbook to outline the main policies of the organisation. Some you may wish to consider below:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Spark is committed to the principle of equal opportunities. Spark is opposed to any form of less favourable treatment and aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences. Spark sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the organisations and people we serve. All volunteers must declare their support for the objectives of the Equality Opportunities Policy.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

The relationship between Spark and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that Spark is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to the clients who use it, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service. If your role as a volunteer does not meet with Spark standards, your case will be dealt with in the same manner as paid staff.

HEALTH & SAFETY

For more detailed policies, such as Health and Safety, you may want to have this as an appendix or just ensure that the policy is available to read should the volunteer wish to see it.

Health & Safety wellbeing relies on co-operation between members of staff, volunteers and management. The full policy is available to read.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Spark recognises that volunteers gain information about individuals and organisations during the course of their work or activities that may be of a private or confidential nature. In most cases such information will not be stated as confidential and volunteers may have to exercise common sense and discretion in identifying whether such information is expected to be kept confidential. Please see the full policy for more detailed information.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

We can give you a template Volunteer Agreement on request.

You will be given a copy of the Volunteer Agreement which must be signed.