

# NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

## ENDING THE VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP

Many volunteering roles have a natural lifecycle and volunteers leave for a variety of reasons. In most cases volunteers do not leave for negative reasons – they may be moving out of the area, gaining paid employment or merely have new priorities in their life.

However, sometimes there may be an underperformance or personnel issue with a volunteer that may require you to end their relationship with your organisation. In such circumstances, having exit processes in place for all scenarios will enable you to provide a civil end to any volunteer relationship irrespective of the circumstances.

### ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which you have a framework in place to provide support/feedback to your volunteers, including the need for fair and transparent procedures for ending the involvement of a volunteer.

### WHEN A VOLUNTEER DECIDES TO LEAVE

If your volunteer is leaving for positive reasons, consider how you can recognise them for their contribution. Don't forget to provide outgoing volunteers with the opportunity to provide feedback that may help you improve your volunteering programs going forward. An exit interview is your last opportunity to support your staff, help them feel valued and hear any safeguarding concerns. When someone is leaving an organisation, they may be more willing to talk about any concerns they have about the organisation or the behaviour of others.

Sometimes volunteers may indicate that they wish to leave but may be open to suggestions for staying. If your organisation is interested in retaining the volunteer, it is worth exploring with them the underlying reasons for their desire to leave. There may be personnel issues you are unaware of that are resolvable or the volunteer may simply be looking for a new challenge. You may be able to deploy them into another role or create a new role that meets their changing motivations. If you do though, remember to complete a revised role description to define the new tasks that the volunteer will undertake, the level of time commitment required and any skills/training required.

### REASONS FOR ENDING THE VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP

Sometimes your organisation may be in a position where it needs to end a volunteer's engagement. Such reasons include:

- An end to the need for their services (e.g. when a project ends);
- Underperformance by the volunteer;
- The volunteer is working outside the agreed scope of their role, creating a risk for the organisation;
- A breach of policies or procedures by the volunteer;
- Bullying or harassment of other volunteers or paid staff by the volunteer;



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- Unacceptable conduct by the volunteer;
- The volunteer has done something unlawful.

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Although volunteers have the moral right to fair grievance procedures, they do not legally have standing under unfair dismissal laws. However, whilst your organisation has no legal obligation to engage in due process with volunteers and is within its rights to terminate a volunteer relationship at any time, it is considered good practice to work with the volunteer to get to the bottom of any issues.

Remember that your organisation may be legally responsible for the conduct of your volunteers, so any serious issues need to be dealt with promptly and in accordance with the law. Depending on the nature of a conflict involving a volunteer, they may have legal rights such as the right to work in a safe environment. If in doubt, seek independent advice about your legal obligations based on the specific circumstances of any disagreement.

Be as fair and transparent as possible when working towards ending a volunteer relationship. Try and hold an exit interview to provide an opportunity for the volunteer to have their say. Sometimes underperformance or misconduct might be masking a deeper issue that is unknown to the organisation and that may warrant further investigation

If your organisation has taken reasonable steps to resolve any conflicts with a volunteer and it is apparent that a mutually agreeable outcome is not feasible, it is still possible to end the volunteer relationship with dignity and respect. For example, you and the volunteer can agree that they should retire as a friend of the organisation in recognition of their service.

### SECURITY CHECKS WHEN A VOLUNTEER LEAVES

When a volunteer leaves, for whatever reason, you should ensure that you remove any access to organisational systems and platforms once the volunteer has moved on. Ensure that other staff, volunteers and those in contact with the organisation understand that the volunteer has left and no longer has the duties or privileges of a volunteer and:

- Check all property belonging to the organisation is returned (e.g. ID badges, IT equipment, uniform or keys).
- Confirm they have deleted any personal details or data they held on behalf of the organisation.
- Ask them to remove any references to their volunteering role from their social media accounts.
- Change any relevant passwords, administration rights on social media, email accounts or access codes for locks.
- Ensure that you have correct contact details for them and any additional consent to contact them in the future in line with your data protection policies.
- If the volunteer has raised any safeguarding issues, ensure that they have completed all of the information required for an ongoing investigation.

