

Policy Development Guidelines

Policy development is a bit like washing up - there's no way round it, it's got to be done and when it is you can eat safely and err...show off your crockery. So roll up your sleeves, snap on your marigolds and have a look at some guidelines, hints and tips on developing and implementing policies in the bubbly washing up bowl of the voluntary sector.

What they are?

Policies and procedures provide the framework within which an organisation operates, they define what an organisation does and how to do it. Organisations may have policies that apply to both paid staff and volunteers. The policies and procedures that an organisation needs depends on a number of factors such as the type of work you do and the size of your organisation.

Why have them?

Having clear policies offers clarity and helps you operate more effectively as an organisation. It means there will be fewer misunderstandings or debates about what to do in particular situations.

Who is responsible for developing them?

This will depend on the management structure of your organisation. It is good practice for both staff and volunteers to be involved in the development of policies through consultation. However, the final decision about the content and how it works in practice is for the management committee to decide.

Policies and legal obligations

There is a range of policies an organisation may have. However, it is important to note that employers have legal obligations both to protect themselves (e.g. from prosecution) and employees' rights and working conditions.

The following are the main areas where you need to be aware of your legal obligations:

- Equal Opportunities Legislation including laws on equal pay, equal opportunities in recruitment.

- Health and safety laws including requirements to undertake risk assessments and create a safe and healthy workplace for staff, volunteers and visitors.
- Employment Laws e.g. levels of pay, working hours, holiday entitlements, grievance and disciplinary procedures and flexible working arrangements.
- Asylum and immigration laws state who is entitled to work in the UK.
- Data Protection legislation which ensures that the confidentiality about your staff, volunteers and users is respected.

What policies do you need?

There are dozens of policies that an organisation could potentially have. However high priority policies for any organisation could include:

Health and safety policy
 Equal opportunities policy
 Disciplinary and grievance policy
 Data protection and confidentiality policy
 Recruitment policy
 Terms and conditions or employment policy

Other policies depending on size, age and activity of organisation could include:

Lone Working policy
 Child protection policy
 Volunteer policy and agreements
 Complaints policy
 Harassment policy
 Flexible working policy
 IT policy
 Training policy
 Sickness and absence policy

How do you implement them?

Developing and implementing them is a process of continuous improvement, there is never a moment when you stop developing your policies. Here are some steps that can help for each policy that needs to be developed or modified:

- Discuss within your management committee or with other team members why you are implementing the new policy and what you hope to achieve e.g. there is a change in legislation or a change in the way your organisation operates.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve just copying it from someone else's policy will mean you are less likely to understand and implement it.
- Write it in clear language that everyone can understand.

- Where possible each policy should have guidelines to help implement the policy this could be in the form of a flow diagram.
- Allocate members of staff to be responsible for policy areas; this can include members of the board

How do you review them?

Policy review should be prioritised for any organisation regardless of their size. One way of being effective is to set up a timeline for the implementation and review process. Among other things this will include writing the draft, the policy being approved by the trustees, consultation, and further development if necessary. They should be reviewed regularly so they are kept up to date with changing legislation and change within your organisation. It is very easy to leave policies on the shelf. Ideally they should be reviewed annually and included as part of any induction of new member of staff and volunteer.

So now you have all the ideas, there's no excuse not to get going!

These following websites have further information around policy development as well as downloadable toolkits and model policies.

www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk

www.c3partnership.org

Also Sandy Adirondack's 'Just About Managing?: Effective Management for Voluntary Organizations and Community Groups' is a very useful publication.

This article has been adapted from Suffolk Association of voluntary Organisations' Policies and Procedures toolkit. Thanks to Robin Hodgkinson. For further information you can visit www.savvo.co.uk

Disclaimer: The information provided here is intended to give some pointers, and is not fully comprehensive. More information can be found in the Voscur library. Voscur cannot accept any legal responsibility for how this information is used.

DATE: 8th March 2007