

Health and Safety Policy

The Trustees of The Voluntary Network recognise and accept their responsibility to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to provide and maintain working conditions which are safe, healthy and comply with all statutory requirements and codes of practice and to ensure the health and safety of any other person who may be affected by the operations of The Voluntary Network.

The Voluntary Network will endeavour to create and develop a working environment in which there is an awareness of the vital importance of health and safety and which encourages all employees and volunteers to participate in developing and practising safe working methods and to have regard for the welfare of themselves and others.

Procedure – Organisational Responsibilities

The Trustees

The trustees of The Voluntary Network have the following responsibilities:

- i) the provision and maintenance of a safe place of work with safe access to from it.
- ii) a working environment that is free from hazard and risk to health.
- iii) equipment and systems of work that are safe and free from risk to health.
- iv) such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees at work.
- v) formal systems for identifying hazards.
- vi) adequate first aid facilities.
- vii) adequate means of preventing and fighting fires.
- viii) the monitoring and review of the implementation of the health and safety policy.

Executive

The trustees have overall responsibility for the implementation of the health and safety policy. The trustees have delegated responsibility for health and safety to the Manager (the “Executive”). S/he will maintain safety records, conduct accident investigations, assessments and inspections and ensure the health and safety policy is implemented and adhered to. S/he will familiarise him/herself with all relevant health and safety legislation in order to advise the trustees.

Supervisors

All workers responsible for supervising other staff or volunteers are responsible for the health and safety of their staff and volunteers and will:

- ensure that on joining The Voluntary Network all new employees and volunteers are given training in health and safety matters appropriate to their duties, including accident reporting, emergency procedures, fire precautions, code of safe conduct and location of first aid box.
- ensure that all employees and volunteers are provided with adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure health and safety of employees and volunteers.
- ensure that all employees and volunteers are familiar with The Voluntary Network’s health and safety at work policy.
- co-operate with and participate in the investigation of all accidents and conduct of assessments and inspections.

- within their area of authority, regularly inspect the workplace with regard to the suitability of equipment provided for health and safety of employees, check work methods and practices to ensure safe systems of work.

Employees and Volunteers

The success of the health and safety policy and its implementation cannot be ensured unless there is active co-operation from the employees and volunteers. All employees and volunteers have a statutory duty to promote their health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions.

All employees and volunteers will:

- make themselves familiar with and conform to the health and safety policy and observe safety rules at all times.
- work safely and efficiently and with due regard for the health, safety and welfare of others including the public.
- report accidents and incidents promptly that may lead to injuries.
- report all unsafe conditions that may arise.
- co-operate with management when accidents require investigation.
- comply with statutory obligations and requirements of the codes of practice.
- not interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of safety.
- use any equipment provided in accordance with the training and instruction that they have received.

Administrative Arrangements

1. First Aid And Accident/ Incident Reporting

During the induction programme employees and volunteers will be advised the first aid box available at all offices.

Accident/ Incident Reporting

All accidents, however minor, must be reported to the supervisor who will complete an accident report form (near misses, potential hazards and any damage must also be reported immediately).

All accidents (near misses, potential hazards and damage) will be investigated and reported to the manager who will take responsibility for ensuring that corrective action is taken where appropriate to prevent a recurrence.

The manager responsible for health and safety will notify the appropriate authorities where necessary.

2. Emergency Procedures

Fire Procedures

On discovering a fire you should:

1. Sound the Alarm.
2. Leave the building as quickly as possible (without running) by the nearest exit and go straight to the assembly point.
DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings
DO NOT re-enter the building until advised by the Fire Service or a senior member of staff that it is safe to do so.
3. Ensure that the Fire Brigade have been called.

In addition, please ensure that

- You are aware of the location of all exits
- You know the location of the fire alarm and fire appliances and how to use them
- You know where to assemble in the event of an evacuation.

3. Fire Precautions

Potential fire risks need not be dangerous provided that some simple but important precautions are observed by all employees and volunteers.

- Memorise the evacuation procedure, your emergency exit and assembly point in case of fire.
- Familiarise yourself with the position of fire fighting equipment and the correct method of operation of extinguishers and never interfere with, or misuse, the fire equipment.
- Keep fire exits, routes and access to fire fighting equipment clear from any obstructions; do not wedge fire doors open.
- Keep your working area free of waste as far as possible and in particular those areas which are not easily accessible, e.g. under desks, behind radiators, etc. Keep all combustible materials a safe distance from heating appliances and do not place anything on heaters.
- There is to be NO SMOKING on the premises.
- If you see anything which may be a fire hazard, correct it yourself if easy and safe to do so, or report it immediately.

4. Code of Safety Conduct

- Conform to the health and safety at work policy, all health and safety rules and signs, fire precautions and emergency procedures.
- Ensure that you understand and follow the safe operation of your duties; ask if you do not understand any aspect of these.
- Report all accidents, near misses, potential hazards and damage immediately.
- Do not interfere with or misuse anything provided for the health and safety of employees or volunteers.
- Do not act in a way that could endanger yourself or others; do not play practical jokes.
- Do not run, especially on stairs or steps. Use handrails; never read while walking.
- Keep your work area tidy and clear of obstructions; do not leave things lying around.
- Clean up any spilt liquids, tracked in rain, etc immediately.
- In the event of your being called upon to handle bulky or heavy objects, only lift or move what you can easily manage; always bend your knees and keep your back straight – take the stress in your legs, not your back. GET ASSISTANCE if in doubt. Do not overreach; do not climb on anything not meant for the purpose; use a ladder, ensuring that it is in good condition.

Electrical equipment is regularly checked and is normally safe when properly used, but:

- never touch electrical equipment with wet hands.
- always disconnect electrical equipment before moving it.
- never attempt electrical repairs unless authorised.
- always keep electrical supply cables and wires away from wet areas or from where they could be walked over, etc.
- always switch off equipment if not in use; disconnect from the main outside normal hours unless instructed otherwise.
- Information on any specific hazards and precautions will be issued as appropriate and is available from the Manager. Training in dealing with hazards will be conducted as appropriate.

5 .Display Screen Equipment - Precautions

It is the policy of The Voluntary Network to optimise use and application of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) whilst safeguarding the health, welfare and job satisfaction of those involved in operating such equipment. The following should be observed:

- short, frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks, e.g a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15 minute break every 2 hours.
- where the employee's or volunteer's duties includes the operation of a VDU as well as other duties, they should organise their working time so that VDU work is interspersed with other activities whilst maintaining an acceptable level of efficiency and productivity.
- upon recruitment to jobs involving a significant amount of VDU work employees or volunteers will be advised to have an eye test, the cost of which will be reimbursed to the employee. Where an employee is advised that glasses are needed, these must be obtained and worn. This procedure will also apply to current employees.
- all VDU users are reminded that regular check-ups are advisable and should not be neglected.
- in certain circumstances, it may be necessary for an employee or volunteer to obtain spectacles for use in VDU work that differ from those worn at other times.
- adapt the furniture to fit the body. The lower back needs support; adjust the backrest if necessary. Place feet on the floor or use a footrest and use a document holder if necessary.
- Adjust the VDU to increase your comfort. The top should be just below eye level. Contrast and brightness may be adjusted for individual preference. Position the VDU at a 90° angle to windows if possible
- dim the lights or adjust blinds/curtains if necessary but do not make the room too dark.
- avoid wearing light coloured clothing which can reflect light on to the screen.
- Look into the distance periodically – at something at least 20 feet away.
- do some stretching exercises should be undertaken during the day (neck, shoulder, back, wrists, hands and fingers).

6. Information and Training

New Employees and Volunteers

On joining the organisation, all employees and volunteers will be informed of the general health and safety aspects of their employment and of any specific information appropriate to them.

All Employees and Volunteers

All employees will be informed about, and trained in, health and safety matters including exposure to any identified risks. Such information and training will be given in the event of there being a change in circumstances affecting health and safety, and otherwise will be adapted and repeated periodically where appropriate. Training will be conducted during working hours if at all possible.

7. Risk Assessment

Regular and systematic inspections and risk assessments of all potential hazardous substances and work activities will be made by, or under the authority of the Manager and will take into account all the relevant regulations and codes of practice. Specialist advice will be obtained if necessary and the risk assessment policy and procedure will be reviewed annually. The significant findings will be recorded and appropriate preventative and/or protective measures taken as necessary.

8. Alcohol and Drugs Abuse

Over-indulgence in alcohol and drugs can lead to dependency and resultant health problems. It can impair an individual's performance at work, adversely affecting the efficiency of the organisation and jeopardising the safety of others.

Any member of staff who is concerned for their own, or any other member of staff/volunteers safety must inform the manager. The manager is then required to advise the Chairperson of the concerns raised.

In the event that the concerns are regarding to the manager they must inform the Chair.

When an employee or volunteer admits having a problem of this nature and agrees to undergo treatment for it, the scheme will regard the matter in the same way as any other illness and will support the individual's efforts to overcome the problem.

Should the individual not co-operate with treatment or suffer a relapse, or if it appears that recovery is unlikely, a warning will be issued to the employee requiring a full recovery. If this does not materialise, then dismissal is likely.

This policy in no way relieves an employee from the requirement not to consume alcohol or drugs, nor be under their influence on the organisation's premises. Failure to comply with this rule is likely to result in dismissal without notice.

9. Smoking

By law Smoking is not permitted at The Voluntary Network offices or within the building. The external designated smoking areas must be used.

10. Infectious Diseases/Conditions

Job applicants for paid or unpaid work and existing employees and volunteers who have, or suffer from, an infectious disease/condition will be treated in the same way as any other person except in so far as it puts the health and safety of themselves or others at risk or otherwise adversely affects their ability to perform their duties.

11. Mobile Telephones

When travelling, staff should be free from using the phone and mobile phones should therefore be switched off whilst driving a vehicle. Use of the mobile phone with a hands free facility is also not recommended as it can cause distraction and lack of concentration.

The phones can be set up to take messages that can then be checked at the start or end of a journey when the car is parked.

The safety notes from the phone guide should be read as a reminder.

12. Personal Safety

It is the policy of The Voluntary Network to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aware of and fulfils their responsibilities for safety from violence at work. To this end, The Voluntary Network is committed to:

- conducting a regular analysis within the scheme to identify risk, hazards, problems or patterns or other issues.
- introducing as necessary, preventative measures to minimise the risk of violence at work.
- making all new members of staff aware of the personal safety policy and their responsibilities within it.
- providing after care procedures such as signposting to counselling and time off work.
- training staff to ensure that they can fulfil their responsibilities under the policy and protect them at work.

All employees and volunteers must:

- take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omission.
- use sensible measures to ensure their safety when working alone or travelling to keep appointments with people they have never met.
- attend training events such as those concerned with the policy.
- not endanger themselves or their colleagues. In particular, they are warned against using provocative language or gestures towards fellow employees, volunteers or members of the public.
- not put at risk his or her life or the lives of others whilst attempting to prevent an act of violence.
- in an emergency ensure that the police/emergency services are summonsed
- if subjected to any violence whatsoever (including verbal abuse, threats and actual physical assault), they must complete a report form at the earliest possible opportunity and return it to their manager.

13. Stress

It is the aim of The Voluntary Network to ensure that all employees and volunteers are kept safe and healthy at work and are not subjected to excessive workloads, onerous working practices or a detrimental working environment which might, if unchecked, cause the employee stress. It is also the aim of The Voluntary Network to identify and assist those employees and volunteers who are suffering from stress, for whatever reason, and finding it difficult to cope by offering reasonably practical alternatives and support mechanisms.

Employees and volunteers may seek help themselves from a GP, counsellor or colleague. If it is the employee's or volunteer's belief that their duties or the working environment is the problem, the employee or volunteer is encouraged to raise it with his/her supervisor. Any such complaint will be dealt with sympathetically, maintaining confidentiality as appropriate, fully investigated and appropriate steps taken to assist.

An employee or volunteer may initially not recognise the symptoms of stress. There are a variety of symptoms that may indicate a tendency to stress that has an adverse impact on the employee's work. A supervisor may recognise symptoms associated with stress and discuss these in confidence with the employee or volunteer. If an employee or volunteer is prone to accidents, constantly feeling drowsy, has an inability to concentrate, feels or becomes violent or aggressive, experiences mood swings or erratic behaviour, or depression, these may be signs of stress. The employee or volunteer is encouraged to seek help to identify the cause and take appropriate steps to deal with it.

14. Lifting and Handling loads

Lifting and handling loads incorrectly can cause serious injury including twisted and torn muscles, dislocation and bone fractures, slipped discs and hernias in addition to general fatigue.

All employees and volunteers should observe the following good handling techniques:

1. **examine the object** – for size, shape and weight. Decide how and where to hold. Check for grease, oil and sharp edges.
2. **clear your path** – of obstructions and tripping hazards.
3. **know** – where and how you will let the object down.
4. **get help** – if you have doubts about lifting objects.

- Employees and volunteers should be aware of their own limitations. Lifting or moving an object should not be attempted unless the employee or volunteer is absolutely sure that it is within his/her capabilities. When under pressure at work it is easy to take on more than you can safely handle.
- Lift smoothly, avoid jerky motions and look for alternatives for lifting, pushing or pulling. Wherever necessary use a mechanical aid. Stop work if you feel strain and report to your supervisor immediately.
- Wherever possible try to break down a heavy load, which can be handled more easily. However, it should be noted that several lighter loads may increase the risk if awkward movements have to be repeated.
- Where the centre of gravity is not the middle of the load it must be handled more carefully to avoid injury. Before you attempt to handle an unfamiliar load try to get an idea of its weight distribution so that it can be handled more safely. The best way to test the load is by lifting up a corner and rocking it.
- Where a load is bulky or unwieldy, for example where it is too large to fit between your knees when you crouch to pick it up from the floor, then it will probably be necessary to get help. Generally, if a load exceeds 75cm in diameter assistance should be sought, as there is an increased risk of injury. It may be possible to break down the load into smaller loads. It must be remembered that both repetitive handling and team handling have their own risks.

Handling Techniques

- **Place the feet :** Stand close to the object – feet should be a little way apart and the leading leg as far forward as comfortable. This should give a stable and balanced base for lifting.
- **Adopt a good posture:** Stand with shoulders facing the same direction as hips. The back should be straight, knees bent and the load grasped with both hands as near to waist level as possible. Lean forwards a little over the load if necessary to get a good grip.
- **Get a good grip:** Grasp the object firmly, always try to hook fingers under the load to make sure your grip won't slip as this is less fatiguing than keeping fingers straight.
- **Lift with the legs:** Stand up slowly and straighten legs. After they are straight, bring the back to a vertical position. Lift smoothly and avoid jerky motions.
- **Hold the object close:** Keep the heaviest part of the load as close to the body as possible. When changing direction, move the feet rather than twisting the body.
- **Put down before adjusting:** Place the load and then move into the desired position.
- **Lifting Overhead –** Avoid lifting objects above shoulder height. Where it is necessary to lift objects overhead, a platform or sturdy ladder should be used. Never use a chair or a box. If in doubt, always get help.
- **Lifting Heavy Objects –** If an object is too heavy, large or hard to handle, get help. Ensure that one person is the leader, that moving the object is done one step at a time and the load is distributed evenly. On a stairway, the carrier of the lower end of the load should take most of the weight. This is especially hazardous if he or she is working backwards.

15 General Office Safety

Office Safety

Office accommodation within The Voluntary Network is generally considered “low risk” in health and safety terms. However, hazards are still present in the office environment. In order to reduce or eliminate accidents in the workplace the following guidelines should be observed:

- Electrical leads should not be allowed to trail where someone may trip over them. Power outlets should be switched off overnight.
- Drawers in desks and filing cabinets should not be left open. Filing cabinets can become top heavy if more than one drawer is open. Heavy materials should be kept in bottom of drawers of filing cabinets. If this is inconvenient, take care to only open one drawer at a time.
- Gangways and passages should be clear.
- Employees and volunteers should report to the manager any defect they are aware of in floors.
- Care should be taken when climbing or descending stairs. No running is permitted.
- Shelves should not be overloaded.
- Where it is necessary to move heavy office equipment such as computers, etc. care must be taken to avoid personal injury and if necessary assistance should be sought.
- The greatest cause of absence from work is back trouble. Employees and volunteers must take special care to control their posture especially when sitting down. An upright position should be maintained if possible and the chair should support the small of the back.

Exits and Routes

In an emergency, the building may need to be evacuated quickly – in the event of a fire for example. It is therefore vital that all exits and routes are maintained free of obstructions at all times and that the following guidelines are observed:

- Boxes or equipment should not be abandoned in corridors, or directly in front of fire doors.
- Fire doors should not be propped open, they are designed to restrict the spread of fire.
- Extra care must be taken on staircases especially when carrying objects.

Storage and Stacking

- Heavier items should be placed on lower shelves and lighter items on higher shelves and heavier items under lighter ones.
- Materials should be stacked securely, not too high and cross stacked making sure they will not topple or overhang and that no sharp edges stick out.
- Articles should not be stacked or stored causing an obstruction to fire exit routes.
- Employees and volunteers should never stand on balanced boxes or chairs to reach stored items.
- When removing items from a stack the top items should always be removed first and safety steps used as necessary.