

VOLUNTEER INDUCTIONS

What Is An Induction?

Once a volunteer has been recruited it is very important to give them a sense of belonging, make them feel welcome and valued, and to orientate them into the Group. A thorough induction is vital to ensure that a volunteer understands their role and how their work will benefit the Group. It should also enable the volunteer to carry out their work safely and effectively but most of all make a new volunteer feel comfortable and at ease with their role.

Induction helps volunteers become familiar with:

- the people
- the surroundings
- the role
- the group

A good induction should ensure that the volunteer:

- settles into a new environment
- develops the knowledge and skills they need to carry out the role
- understands how their role relates to the rest of the group
- understands the culture of RDA and what is expected of them
- becomes a motivated and effective member of the team as quickly as possible

What To Include?

The induction should include a variety of information designed to bring the volunteer up to date with policies and procedures at the group, as well as give them information about the Group, its activities and where they fit in.

The induction needs to cover essential items such as the structure of the organisation, details on the group and should cover important policies such as Safeguarding and Health & Safety. You may find a Volunteer Induction Checklist useful when introducing someone to volunteering to ensure that all aspects are covered. A sample checklist can be found on the next page.

An Induction programme consists of three main parts:

Pre-arrival

This forms part of the recruitment process, and will consist of any information about the group and the role that you send the volunteer before they start. For example:

- Leaflet or similar about the organisation and what it does
- Volunteer role description
- Contact details and directions and/or map of how to get there

Organisational Induction

Explaining what the organisation's goals are and how it goes about achieving them, and helping the volunteers understand where they fit within the Group and RDA as a whole. You might include:

- Background/history of the organisation
- Mission Statement

- Services provided and client groups
- Talks from paid staff and established volunteers about their roles in relation to volunteers and the organisation as a whole.
- Volunteer Welcome Pack

Local Induction

Ensuring that volunteers have a clear understanding of their role and how they will carry it out, as well as site-specific information and guidance on support and supervision.

- Health and safety issues e.g. H&S policy, first aid procedures, accident reporting, policy on smoking, emergency exits and evacuation procedures
- Financial issues e.g. how to claim expenses (and what can be claimed)
- Volunteer Agreement
- Arrangements for support and supervision, including if appropriate allocating a key member of staff, mentor or buddy
- Problem-solving procedures (discipline/grievance/complaints)
- Training programme/training needs identified
- Relevant policies e.g. confidentiality, data protection

Helping Volunteers Settle in

- Ensure that each new volunteer has a named person who they can ask if they are in doubt about anything to do with their role – this could be someone who has done the job before.
- Introduce them to the people they will come in contact with in fulfilling their role and the person overseeing their role.
- Check they have a clear and accurate understanding of their role and any responsibilities they will be taking on.
- Make sure they know where to find the things they need to fulfil their role (and how to work/use them). It is often a good idea to walk new volunteers around the Group, its facilities and resources.
- Check they have appropriate skills, qualifications and experience. It might be helpful for them to “shadow” someone more experienced who can “show them the ropes”.
- Provide details of any meetings they are expected to attend – dates, times and locations.
- Explain the communication processes within the Group
- Take time early on to give new volunteers feedback on how they are doing. People like to know how they are getting on and to be given the opportunity to improve

Group Versus Individual Induction

The way you go through the induction process will depend on a number of factors, including the number of volunteers you have starting at the same time and the amount of space you have for group activities. Group induction can take less time overall, and allows for discussions to take place where appropriate. It can also enable volunteers to start to build relationships and provide a support system for each other. On the other hand if you only have volunteers starting from time to time, it might put them off if they have to wait for enough others to join and form a group, so it could be as well to start people one at a time. Some things might be covered more effectively in a group context, such as “green card” training.

How Much Information Do I Include?

It’s important to pace yourself. Don’t overwhelm new volunteers with masses of detail on their first day. At the same time, you need to make sure that what they need to know is covered. Just remember that it doesn’t all have to happen on the first day. It’s a good idea, though to keep a checklist so that you and the volunteers can keep track of what has been covered and what hasn’t.

VOLUNTEER INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Organisational matters	Done	Date
Any Group mission statement and values		
Introduction to Volunteers, Participants, Horses and Ponies and Supporters		
Volunteer Records and Procedures	Done	Date
Volunteer Agreement		
Volunteer Enrolment Form		
Expenses		
Volunteer Basic training Record Card		
Volunteer meetings and events		
Disclosure Check		
Policies	Done	Date
Volunteer Policy		
Equal Opportunities		
Health & Safety		
Protection of Vulnerable People		
Confidentiality		
Complaints		
Insurance		
Practical Details	Done	Date
Tour of the Group		
Introduction to other staff and volunteers		
Working Area		
Tea/coffee/kettle		
First Aid		
Fire Drill		
Office Procedures (if applicable)	Done	Date
Telephone System		
Photocopier/Computer System etc		
Mail System		
What's kept where (eg stationary, stamps)		