

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS



Pembrokeshire County Council
Housing and Regulatory Services Department
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Introduction

Charities and their activities represent a vast and significant sector of the modern day workforce. Charity work is often seen as something different, something people do in their leisure time and something that is informally organised. In reality the voluntary sector employs 1 in 25 of the general workforce and involves an estimated 23 million volunteers.

The problem is partly one of perception. Charities are often not viewed as businesses as they are not profit-making concerns and they often rely on unpaid volunteers. The Charities Safety Group report that in some charities, the ratio of volunteers employed to workforce was 30 to 1.

The average age of volunteers is older than the general working population, often employing retired people whose fitness and mobility may be declining.

In addition, many charities exist in run down accommodation e.g. old shops, converted churches etc. They may not have been properly surveyed and works may be carried out by well meaning individuals who may not have the necessary knowledge, skill or equipment to carry out works safely.

This guidance is designed to help you, as a charity or an organisation that uses voluntary workers, to understand your health and safety responsibilities. The guidance is based on a publication issued by the Health and Safety Executive and the Charities Safety Group entitled 'Charity and Voluntary Workers – a guide to health and safety at work.' (See references section).

It is important to remember that voluntary work involves a wide range of activities from working in a charity shop to holding a firework display to taking disabled people on holiday. It therefore is not possible to deal with all hazards in one document, but this information is a guide to your legal obligations towards your volunteers.

Legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASWA)

HASWA sets out the general duties which employers, the self-employed and people in control of premises have towards their employees and others who could be affected by the work activities (e.g. volunteers, customers, delivery-men etc)

Section 2 of the Act places a duty on employers to ensure, the health, safety and welfare of their employees while at work, in particular to: -

- ◆ provide equipment that is safe and without risks to health and ensure safe work practices and procedures;
- ◆ ensure the safe handling, storage, transport and use of articles and substances;
- ◆ provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision;
- ◆ maintain the workplace in a safe condition, including safe entry and exit;
- ◆ provide a work environment that is safe and provide adequate welfare facilities.

Section 2(3) requires employees of five or more people to have a written statement of their health and safety policy. It should be their own statement, specific to their business, setting out their general policy for protecting the health and safety of their employees at work and their organisation and arrangements for putting the policy into practice. The policy must be brought to the attention of the employees. Although the Act specifically requires employees to be made aware of the policy and its content, it would be good practice for voluntary workers to also have access to the policy.

Section 3 places a duty on employers and the self-employed to conduct their undertakings in a way that ensures that people other than their employees are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. This obligation extends to members of the public who may be affected by the work activity and would also include voluntary workers.

Regulation 4 places a duty on people in control of non-domestic premises e.g the landlord of a shop, to ensure that access to the premises and any equipment and substances provided by him are safe and without risks to safety. This duty relates specifically to non-employees i.e. people who are not employed by the landlord but who may be working at the premises e.g voluntary workers.

The above duties are qualified by the phrase 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. This means that the cost and effort of doing something should be balanced against the risk. The greater the risk posed by a work activity,

the greater the control measures will need to be. This process of risk assessment and control is fundamental to effective health and safety performance.

There are several sets of Regulations made under HASWA, which expand on the general duties. Some of these Regulations, such as the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 apply across the full range of workplaces, whereas others such as the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, apply to more specific situations. The majority of health and safety Regulations share a common approach in that they require the employer to consider the risks that may arise from carrying on the business and to devise and implement suitable measures to minimise those risks.

Risk Assessment

Probably the most important of set of Regulations are the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. They require employers to carry out assessments of risks to employees and others including voluntary workers. If five or more persons are employed, the significant findings of the assessment must be recorded. Before carrying out an assessment, it is important to understand the terms 'hazard' and 'risk'.

A 'hazard' is something with the potential to cause harm.

A 'risk' is the likelihood that the harm will be realised.

In order to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, the following steps should be followed:

- ◆ Identify the hazard e.g. electricity.
- ◆ Decide who may be harmed (e.g. employees, voluntary workers, customers) and how (e.g. by electric shock, burns)
- ◆ Consider existing control measures e.g. trip switches and regular inspection of electrical equipment.
- ◆ Identify and implement any additional control measures that may be required.
- ◆ Review the assessment periodically.

The guidance referred to in the introduction provides particular advice on health and safety issues relating to fund-raising activities, charity shops and off-site working. The following paragraphs consider some of the main issues that should be included in the risk assessments for each of these activities:

1. Fund-raising activities

Fund-raising activities may range from low risk coffee mornings to sponsored bungee jumps to large-scale pop concerts.

It is important to consider how an event is planned and managed from site selection to site clearance. A number of people, organisations and employers may be involved and in order for the event to run effectively and safely, extensive planning, consultation and co-operation is required.

The following issues should be considered for outdoor events:

- ◆ **Site selection** – size of site in relation to number of anticipated visitors, topography of site (level ground for attractions/stalls etc), spacing between attractions (e.g. for people to circulate safely and for activities to be carried out safely e.g. coconut shies), suitability of the ground in inclement weather (is it likely to become waterlogged?).
- ◆ **Site Security** – are stewards required, do they have adequate means of communication and sufficient training?
- ◆ **First aid provision** – are there sufficiently stocked first aid posts with adequately trained personnel? Is there provision for emergency access by ambulance and fire engines?
- ◆ **Site structures** – are all structures safely erected and stable, e.g. marquees, tables where hot food or drinks are served?
- ◆ **Cash handling** – the security of money held on the site must be considered together with the safety of personnel delivering it to the bank.
- ◆ **Traffic routes** – clearly marked traffic routes may be required for both pedestrians and vehicles. This is particularly important in car parking areas.
- ◆ **Other attractions**, e.g. fairground rides, bungee jumps, firework displays etc. These must all be subject to risk assessment and if they are being organised by another undertaking, you must work with them to ensure all safety measures have been taken.
- ◆ **Other legislation** – you should ensure that such events comply with other relevant legislation and that the following issues are considered, food safety, public entertainment licensing, the likelihood of noise disturbance to local residents, safe storage of fuel for generators or explosives for fire work displays. Further advice on these issues may be obtained from the Housing and Regulatory Services Department of Pembrokeshire County Council.

2. Charity Shops

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 apply to all workplaces and cover a wide range of basic health, safety and welfare issues such as ventilation, heating, lighting, seating and welfare facilities. Not all of the requirements of these Regulations apply if no employees work at the premises, but you still need to assess the risks to any voluntary workers who work there.

In addition to the general requirements of the above Regulations, the following may be of particular relevance in charity shops:-

- ◆ **Storage of goods-** There may be little control over the delivery of stock to shops selling second-hand goods. Large amounts of items may arrive at the same time and there may be a limited storage or sales area. It is important that pedestrian traffic routes are kept clear at all times to prevent customers, staff and volunteers falling or tripping over stock stored in corridors or on the shop floor. You must also ensure that goods stored at a height on shelving or rails are secure and are not likely to fall onto someone and that the shelving is secure and strong enough to support the weight of the goods.

If it is possible to store goods at shoulder height or below then this should be done. This will avoid the need to use stepladders or for staff to overstretch when reaching for goods. If goods are stored at a height then stepladders must be provided and maintained in a safe condition.



- ◆ **Manual handling-** Second hand goods may arrive in plastic sacks or boxes. The workers in the shop may not know what is in the containers and should not be required to move heavy loads without assistance or provision for reducing the load.

An assessment should be carried out of manual handling activities, which will include:

- ◆ the task e.g. lifting, stretching, pulling etc
 - ◆ the loads e.g. are they heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp etc?
 - ◆ the working environment, space constraints, uneven or slippery floors, changes in floor level etc.
 - ◆ the individuals capacity, e.g. particular care must be taken if women are pregnant, workers are elderly or known to have back problems or other medical conditions.
 - ◆ Other factors e.g. whether movement or posture is hindered by personal protective equipment or clothing or whether specific training is required.
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- ◆ **Second hand goods** – goods such as electrical appliances, furniture and toys, which are offered for sale, must be in a safe condition. Further advice may be obtained from the Trading Standards Team within the Housing and Regulatory Services Department of Pembrokeshire County Council.

 - ◆ **Workplace equipment**- any equipment provided for use by employees or voluntary workers must be in a safe condition e.g. washing machines, irons and ironing boards which may be used to prepare donated clothes for resale. All electrical goods should be periodically inspected (plugs, cables, casing, sockets) to ensure that they are in good condition.

3. Off-site working

Many voluntary jobs require workers to work away from the employers base e.g. home carers, providing hospital transport, accompanying disabled persons on outings or taking part in environmental projects. It is essential to ensure the health and safety of both the voluntary workers and also the people they are helping whilst in the community and relevant issues must be included in the employers risk assessment.

The main issues to consider are:

- ◆ **Communication** – Personnel at the work-base should know who is working where and when. If a means of communication e.g. radios or mobile telephones are not available, this may be facilitated by use of a register which the voluntary worker signs stating what their intentions are for the day, where they may be contacted and their estimated time for return to the base or completion of their work. There must always be

someone who can monitor the register at the base and the system must be followed rigidly to ensure its success.

- ◆ **Personal safety** - Workers should be aware of the risks of off-site working e.g. route planning, lone working, safe transport, isolated locations, high risk clients, dangerous dogs etc. The employer should address identified hazards and implement control measures.



- ◆ **Outdoor working** - It is necessary to consider whether the volunteer is provided with adequate clothing and protective equipment for outdoor working. Consideration should be given to the availability of welfare facilities e.g. toilets, washing facilities and the provision of lunch and tea breaks.
- ◆ **First aid** - It may be necessary to provide off-site workers with basic first aid kits and to ensure that they are familiar with the charities reporting procedure for accidents and near-misses.
- ◆ **Information, instruction and training** – All the above must be included in any training provided to the volunteer workers. They must be equipped with all the necessary information and training prior to commencing their duties.

General Requirements

Accident Reporting

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 require certain incidents to be reported to this department. These include:

- ◆ Death of an employee, customer, voluntary worker etc.
- ◆ Major injury e.g. fracture to an employee
- ◆ Any injury as a result of physical violence.
- ◆ Member of the public being taken to hospital from the premises as a result of an accident (this will include volunteers).

This department must be notified as soon as possible e.g. by telephone and a written report (using the form at Appendix A) submitted within 10 days

- ◆ If an employee suffers an injury which keeps them off work for over three days (including non-working days such as weekends), the incident must also be reported using the form at Appendix A.
- ◆ Work related diseases e.g. occupational dermatitis and dangerous occurrences e.g. collapse of a wall or floor, or an electric short circuit or overload which causes a fire must be reported.

Although records must be maintained of all reportable incidents it is recommended that they are also maintained for non-reportable accidents in order to identify trends.



First Aid

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees if they are injured at work.

First-aiders are not required in all work situations, but if they are provided they must be adequately trained. Information regarding local first aid training organisations can be obtained from this department.

As a minimum every workplace must have an appointed person, that is someone to take charge in the event of an accident and to have responsibility for maintaining and restocking the first aid box.

Although these Regulations specifically require first aid provision for employees, a similar level of provision should be provided for non-employees. The level of provision may be decided upon through risk assessment.

Insurance

The Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 requires all employers to have insurance for their staff to a minimum of £5 million and the current certificate must be displayed in the workplace.

It is strongly recommended that public liability insurance is also in place to provide cover for voluntary workers, customers etc.

Additional insurance may be required for particular one-off, high-risk events such as sponsored parachute jumps, bungee jumps etc.

Further Information

Pembrokeshire County Council Tel: 01437 764551 Housing and Regulatory Services Department

- ◆ Health and Safety
- ◆ Food Safety
- ◆ Trading Standards (product safety)
- ◆ Licensing (public entertainment and lotteries)

Mid and West Wales Fire Brigade Tel: 01437 762131
Fire Safety in the Workplace

Charities Safety Group Tel: 0700 900 9128

A selection of leaflets regarding health and safety issues are available from the Health and Safety Team of Pembrokeshire County Council.

Additional publications are available from:

HSE Books
PO Box 1999
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 6FS

Tel: 01787 881165
Fax. 01787 313995

In particular you may wish to obtain a copy of:

'Charity and Voluntary Workers – a guide to health and safety at work'
by the Health and Safety Executive and the Charities Safety Group. HSG 192, ISBN 0-7176-2424-2 (price-£12)