

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

2. Running your organisation

2.8 Health & safety



Introduction

This guidance is designed to introduce you, a charity or as an organisation that works with volunteers, to your health and safety responsibilities. It is only an introduction. To obtain further information please contact the organisations listed at the end of this information sheet.

Health and safety law

UK health and safety law sets out the responsibilities which employers, the self-employed and those people in control of premises have towards their employees, volunteers and those present for work activities. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, you have to ensure the health and safety of others who may be affected by what you do or fail to do. This includes people who: work for you, including volunteers, trainers and sub-contractors and visitors to your premises. It is very important that appropriate training is provided and that procedures are in place to manage all health and safety risks that emanate from your organisation's activities.

Who enforces health and safety law?

Health and safety law is enforced by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from your local authority.

In general your local authority is the enforcing body if your activities are:

- office based
- retail or wholesale
- warehousing
- hotel and catering
- sports and leisure
- entertainment or other cultural or recreational activities, excluding broadcasting
- residential accommodation, excluding nursing homes
- concerned with places of worship
- pre school child care
- mobile vending

The HSE is the enforcing body for most other types of activity.

Inspectors can visit any premises or workplaces without notice. They have wide-ranging powers, which include the right of entry to your premises, the right to talk to employees and safety representatives and to take photographs and samples. They are entitled to your co-operation and answers to questions.

Some basic information

The Health and Safety at Work Act says that you must:

- have a written, up to date health and safety policy if you employ five or more people;
- carry out a risk assessment (and if you employ five or more people, record the main findings and your arrangements for health and safety);
- notify occupation of premises to your local inspector if you are a commercial or industrial business
- display a current certificate as required by the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 if you employ anyone;
- display the Health and Safety Law poster for employees or give out the leaflet;
- notify certain types of injuries, occupational diseases and events, this is in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR); notify your inspector immediately, normally by telephone, if anybody dies, receives a major injury or is seriously affected by e.g. an electric shock or poisoning;
- consult representatives of employee safety or employees themselves on issues such as changes affecting health and safety and the provision of information and training;
- take account of the special needs of workers who are new or expectant mothers.

Hazards and risks

A **hazard** is anything that can cause harm e.g. electricity, equipment.

A **risk** is the chance (big or small) of harm being done.

Who might be harmed

Employees – including those off-site.

Visitors to your premises, e.g. cleaners, contractors.

The public, e.g. when attending training sessions or calling in to buy products or those receiving your voluntary services.

Volunteers – of all ages who might be engaged in your activities e.g. ground clearance, painting and decorating, kitchen work, moving elderly or disabled persons.

First Aid

You must have:

- Someone who can take charge in an emergency. An appointed person must be available whenever people are at work.

- A first aid box.
- Notices telling people where the first aid box is and who the appointed person is.
- As your company grows, look at the need for qualified first aiders. They must have the right training and be given a certificate valid for three years. After that a refresher course and re-examination is necessary.

Training

You must ensure all employees have health and safety training. This has to be repeated periodically or when changes are made.

If you have any doubts about your Health and Safety responsibilities towards your employees or others who may be affected by your work activities, you should seek further advice.

Further information

Environmental Health Offices

Can be contacted for advice if they are your enforcing body. Their telephone number is in your telephone directory under the Local Authority section.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

www.hse.gov.uk – this site gives you an overview about the HSE, its activities and the information it can provide to you.

Specific guidance for voluntary organisations can be found here:

www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary

HSE in conjunction with the Charities Safety Group has produced a document specifically aimed at the voluntary sector. It is entitled *Charity and voluntary workers: a guide to health and safety at work*, ISBN 0 7176 2424 2.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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Produced by WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres.

Last Updated: 08/02/2017