

Maintaining Positive Boundaries

Guidance for Royal
Voluntary Service Volunteers



Royal Voluntary Service is a national charity built on local volunteering, giving support to people who need it in our hospitals and communities.



Maintaining positive boundaries

What are boundaries and why do we need to provide them to help guide our volunteer roles?

Royal Voluntary Service has developed a guide on boundaries which sets the parameters of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour by Royal Voluntary Service volunteers. The boundaries set out what types of volunteer behaviour will or will not be tolerated and provides the standards of behaviour against which we can be measured. This will help to protect all our volunteers and all those that they volunteer with.

Boundaries give volunteers confidence as they know how to react to different situations. Clear boundaries help to develop trusting relationships with participants, who will know what to expect from our volunteers.

Boundaries help to develop professionalism by encouraging high standards of volunteering and consistency between volunteers. For example boundaries should clarify the difference between befriending someone as part of a Royal Voluntary Service activity, in order to offer support, and being their friend in a social sense. Boundaries in volunteering help volunteers manage volunteering-related stress by separating volunteering from their private lives.

What happens if I breach this guidance and exhibit behaviours in the 'Don'ts' categories?

In this guide, we have set out our 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' relating to boundaries.

Volunteers who breach the guidance and exhibit behaviour listed in the 'Don'ts' guidance will be challenged and may be engaged in the processes set out in the Royal Voluntary Service 'Guide for Managers/Coordinators: Resolving volunteer issues, concerns and complaints'.

If behaviour persists, volunteers may be asked to leave volunteering with Royal Voluntary Service for the protection of the volunteer, the participants they support, and the charity.

Remember...

If you have any questions or require any further clarification on these boundaries, please contact the Volunteering Support Team on:

📞 0330 555 0315

✉ volunteer@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk



'Dos' and 'Don'ts' and how to challenge behaviour in the 'Don't' categories

These are intended as an outline of the type of things volunteers need to consider during their volunteering. We have provided examples for each as to why the activity crosses boundaries as well as possible exceptions where the activity may be permissible.

Do: Challenge colleagues, employees and other volunteers when boundaries are breached – remember to challenge the person's action rather than the person themselves (i.e. focus on the specific behaviour that caused the problem).

Exceptions – If you feel uncomfortable challenging a colleague, report it to a Manager or your Volunteer Coordinator who can challenge for you if appropriate or introduce a more formal process.

Respect for colleagues

Do:

✓ **Respect other volunteers and employees.**

Reasons – To support each other, and create a volunteering environment that is pleasant for all.

✓ **Challenge colleagues (volunteers and employees) if you feel they are being discriminatory to other volunteers, employees or participants.**

Reasons – So that the volunteers and employees may learn that their discriminatory behaviour should stop. To set a good example to ALL and show that discrimination is unacceptable. However if this behaviour continues please escalate to a Manager or Volunteer Coordinator.

Don't:

✗ **Discriminate against others.**



Remember...

The 'Equality' e-learning module or handbook are great ways to find out more about this topic.

If you need any help accessing the module you can contact our Learning Support:

✉ learning@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

📞 **07843 357211 (Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm)**

A full copy of the Royal Voluntary Service Equality Policy can be found in the Document Library, or ask your Manager or Volunteer Coordinator for a copy.



Socialising

Do:

- ✓ Carefully consider the implications of socialising with participants outside of volunteering time.

Reasons – Socialising with participants blurs the private and professional roles. It may make maintaining confidentiality difficult. It can lead to all sorts of problems, including breakdown of boundaries, and also carries with it the risk of allegations being made against you by the participant.

Exceptions:

- Having fun and being engaged in activities with volunteers, employees, participants during volunteering time is fine, provided it is clear that this is part of your volunteering role.
- Where personal relationships do form between volunteers and a participant, please do talk to your Manager or Volunteer Coordinator about this to ensure a clear distinction is kept between your volunteering and personal relationships.

Don't:

- ✗ Have sexual relations with participants.

Reasons – Many of our participants are vulnerable older people and so it is important that our volunteers are also acting in their best interests. A sexual relationship could result in a power imbalance and/or allegations of abuse. A volunteer having sexual contact or an intimate relationship with a participant is never acceptable and could lead to Royal Voluntary Service asking you to leave your volunteer role.



Your own personal information

Do:

- ✓ **Keep your own information safe.**
When phoning from your own home you should dial 141 first or have a Royal Voluntary Service mobile phone.

Don't:

- ✗ **Volunteers should never disclose their own personal telephone numbers/ e-mail addresses/social media profiles etc. to participants.**

Reasons – Participants may form unhealthy expectations of their volunteer's relationship and may start contacting their Royal Voluntary Service volunteer at frequent intervals. This erodes the relationship and places unhealthy expectations on the volunteer for continued telephone/ e-mail contact and support. This blurs the lines of professional and private lives and can create stress for both the volunteer and participant.



Social media and IT

Do:

- ✓ **Think carefully about who you allow on your own personal social media accounts from Royal Voluntary Service.**

Reasons – This is your own personal space separate to volunteering with Royal Voluntary Service. There have been cases where social media outside of the volunteering environment has caused offence/ arguments/ or general issues that then impact on the volunteering.

- ✓ **Think carefully about the implications to your volunteering of what you write on social media.**

Reasons – Certain controversial statements on social media may cause reputational damage to Royal Voluntary Service should it be linked to your volunteering which could lead to Royal Voluntary Service questioning your appropriateness to volunteer.

Don't:

- ✗ **Use Royal Voluntary Service social media accounts to share or spread inappropriate content or to take part in any activity that could bring the charity's name into disrepute.**

- ✗ **Allow participants to be part of your own personal social media accounts.**

Reasons – This blurs the boundaries and implies a friendship.

- ✗ **View, download, store or pass on any pornographic, offensive, abusive or illegal material, whatever its source or type on Royal Voluntary Service equipment. Deliberate failure to observe this rule, may result in the withdrawal of your volunteering role.**



Wills and power of attorney

Do:

- ✓ Inform Royal Voluntary Service if you have been named as a beneficiary in a participant's will, or have been asked to be an Executor of a will.
- ✓ Inform Royal Voluntary Service if you have been asked to act as Power of Attorney for a participant.
- ✓ Think carefully about the appropriateness of receiving a benefit linked to a will or acting as Power of Attorney.

Reasons – Royal Voluntary Service has a duty to safeguard our participants and unfortunately financial abuse of vulnerable older people is a known common occurrence. Royal Voluntary Service has to investigate all known practices where a volunteer is named as a beneficiary in a will, as an Executor of a will, or as a Power of Attorney to:

1. Ascertain that no financial coercion has occurred (under our safeguarding duty).
2. Ensure boundaries have not been breached.

Gifts

Do:

- ✓ Think carefully about giving/receiving personal gifts to/from participants.

Reasons – Giving/receiving gifts may give the impression of favouritism or the development of a personal relationship. Receiving gifts from participants may also raise the participant's expectations of the level of support you can provide – it blurs boundaries and may create in the mind of a participant a perceived personal friendship instead of a professional relationship.

Exceptions – It may be appropriate to receive a small gift from a participant where declining it will cause offence. Please always report this to your line manager.

i

Remember...

If you have questions or concerns relating to the above, please contact Royal Voluntary Service Safeguarding Lead on

📞 07760 171577

✉ safeguarding@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Data protection guidelines – other people’s personal and sensitive information

We deal with a lot of information about a large number of people, and we want to be sure everyone’s personal data stays confidential.

Like everyone who uses or collects data, we have to follow strict rules to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) 2018.

The key principles are to make sure you dispose of confidential information safely and all personal information is kept securely.

Do:

- ✓ Respect people’s right to ensure their personal and sensitive information is held securely and confidentially and please do treat people’s personal and sensitive data as you would want your own to be treated.

Don’t:

- ✗ Give out information regarded as ‘personal’ information about other volunteers, employees, or participants. Don’t talk about participants to friends and relatives outside of volunteering.

Reasons – You will be in breach of the data protection act and may place a vulnerable person at risk of harm. You may also reduce the trust in the relationship between a participant and Royal Voluntary Service.

Remember...

It should be accepted that it may be necessary to over-ride the above in the event of legal proceedings, child / vulnerable adult abuse (safeguarding concerns) or where a third party may be at risk of serious and immediate harm. Please see Royal Voluntary Service safeguarding policy/procedure or contact Royal Voluntary Service Safeguarding Lead on

📞 07760 171 577

✉ safeguarding@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

The ‘Data Protection’ e-learning module workbook are great ways to find out more about this topic. A full copy of the Royal Voluntary Service Data Protection Policy can be found in the Document Library.

If you need any help you can contact Learning Royal Voluntary Service support:

✉ learning@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

📞 **07843 357211 (Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm)**



If someone is in immediate risk of harm call 999.

Lending/borrowing

Do:

- ✓ **Think carefully about lending to or borrowing from participants.**

Reasons – Pressure for the return of a borrowed item or money could strain the relationship and affect the work of the charity.

Depending on the context, the above may be a breach of the Royal Voluntary Service Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and places a potentially vulnerable person at

risk of financial abuse. This may result in the volunteer role being terminated.

- ✓ **Consider carefully loaning or borrowing from a colleague (employee or volunteer), especially money.**

Reasons – Pressure for the return of a borrowed item or money could strain the relationship and affect the work of Royal Voluntary Service.

Buying/selling

Don't:

- ✗ **Buy anything from/sell anything to participants.**

Reasons – This can complicate the relationship, creating potential future tension. It can also open you up to potential allegations of financial abuse if a relative, family member or participant thinks the transaction was not fair.

Depending on the context, the above may be a breach of the Royal Voluntary Service Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and places a potentially vulnerable person at risk of financial abuse. This may result in your volunteer role being terminated.

- ✗ **Buy goods for a participant with their money or credit card.**

Reasons – Depending on the context, the above may place a participant as a vulnerable person at risk of financial abuse. It will open you up to accusations of financial abuse. It also takes away choice and control from a participant and, where possible, we should always be helping them to shop independently and make their own choices.

Exceptions – If a participant genuinely cannot access shops physically with the support of volunteers then, providing you follow your service guidance, you can support this participant. However, first priority should always be given to enabling them to shop independently, offering them choice and control over what they purchase.



Products, assets and equipment

Do:

- ✓ Report any colleague who you believe is stealing.

Remember...

Royal Voluntary Service have a Whistleblowing Policy, which can be found in the Document Library and includes details for contacting the 'Integrity' Lead:

📞 07714 898587

✉ integrity@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

If you do not believe you can discuss concerns with a line manager or their superior, this contact can be used. Please see the guidance in the whistle blowing policy on when to use the integrity line.

Don't:

- ✗ Take Royal Voluntary Service products, assets or equipment for personal use. As an example, don't take Royal Voluntary Service stock from a retail unit or take Royal Voluntary Service stationery for personal use.

Reasons – This product, asset or equipment is for the use of Royal Voluntary Service and is an asset of the charity, either for sale (to raise charity income) or to help Royal Voluntary Service deliver our mission and purpose.

Please note: In the case of volunteers taking Royal Voluntary Service products, assets or equipment without permission, this is 'stealing' which is never acceptable and will result in your volunteer role being terminated.

Exceptions – Consumables covered in Royal Voluntary Service volunteer subsistence policy or where management have given *explicit* permission.

Alcoholic drinks and drugs

Don't:

- ✗ Volunteer under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs. Strong prescribed drugs can also be dangerous and impair judgement.

Reasons – Your judgement, emotions and ability to cope with challenging situations will be affected. Royal Voluntary Service insurance is invalid if volunteers are under the influence.

Volunteers should not volunteer when their functioning is impaired due to ill health. If you have an impaired function due to ill health or prescribed medication please discuss this with your Manager or Volunteer Coordinator.

Please note: In the case of volunteers being under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs whilst volunteering at Royal Voluntary Service, this is never acceptable and you may be asked to stop volunteering with us.

Exceptions – Certain volunteering related social events may allow alcohol to be consumed in modest amounts. It is best to seek guidance from management as to whether an event fits into the above category to be clear on expectations relating to boundaries.

Remember...

Our insurance describes intoxication or 'under the influence' as:

'influenced or affected by the ingestion of alcohol, a controlled substance, any intoxicant, or any combination of alcohol, a controlled substance, or an intoxicant, to a degree that the person's reactions and judgment are altered'.

Participating in illegal or unsafe behaviour

Do:

- ✓ **Be aware that any illegal behaviour outside of Royal Voluntary Service volunteering may impact on your ability to continue in your role.**

Reasons – Royal Voluntary Service may have reputational damage associated to proven illegal behaviour by a volunteer, as well as calling in to question whether they are a suitable person to be associated with Royal Voluntary Service as a volunteer.

Changes to DBS/PVG status: As a volunteer of Royal Voluntary Service, should your PVG or DBS status change due to a conviction being issued you have a duty to inform Royal Voluntary Service of this change. Depending on the conviction, your voluntary role may stop as certain convictions 'bar' a volunteer from volunteering with children and/or adults who are vulnerable or at risk of harm. Not all convictions automatically affect your volunteering or employment and all conviction information will be considered individually.

Don't:

- ✗ **Condone or participate in behaviour exhibited by staff, volunteers or participants which is illegal or unsafe.**

Reasons – Volunteers should behave responsibly when volunteering for Royal Voluntary Service and could be held accountable for any resulting actions e.g. accidents, harassment, arrests, etc. that place Royal Voluntary Service, volunteers and participants at risk of reputational damage or harm, as well as any resultant incidents that happen due to unsafe or poor practice.



Remember...

For more information on safe practice, please see our Health and Safety Policy and Procedures or complete our Health and Safety training. A full copy of the Royal Voluntary Service Policy can be found in the Document Library.

The 'Health and Safety' e-learning modules or handbooks are great ways to find out more about this topic. If you need any help you can contact Learning Royal Voluntary Service support:

- ✉ learning@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk
- ☎ 07843 357211 (Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm)



Remember...

Please contact Royal Voluntary Service Safeguarding Lead on

☎ 07760 171577

✉ safeguarding@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

“Volunteering offers enormous value for the person making the gift, and to those receiving it: it changes lives, changes communities and changes society.”

Catherine Johnstone CBE | Chief Executive

Royal Voluntary Service
Beck Court
Cardiff Gate Business Park
Cardiff
CF23 8RP

royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk