

Developing and Sustaining Volunteering in your Organisation

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless"

Volunteers can;

- Add value to your organisation
- Support you to achieve your mission, aims & objectives
- Reach more beneficiaries
- Raise awareness of your organisations
- Bring a diverse range of skills/experience/knowledge

This DOES NOT mean that Volunteers are FREE LABOUR – They are definitely NOT, therefore you should invest time, money to recruit, train and support for your organisation to run a successful volunteer programme.

What underpins good Volunteer Management?

- RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS
- TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
- MANAGING & RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Key to all these elements is the **Volunteer Policy** which should form the framework for a volunteer management programme. It can help people identify

- Benefits and challenges
- Clarify roles

- Expectation
- Includes various policies and procedures which effect a volunteer

The benefits of having a policy is that it demonstrates,

- Commitment – showing you care
- Consistency – fairness, with a diverse range of people, written polices show decisions will not be made on an ad-hoc basis
- Clarity – on where everyone stands
- Unity – all of those involved paid staff, management, trustees all understand why vols are involved and what they do.

Creating a Volunteer Policy

Before creating your volunteer policy, spend some time thinking about some key elements,

- Why are you involving volunteers?
- How do they fit into the organisation?
- What should be in your volunteer policy? There is no set format, but ideally it should be a statement of intent. A shorter, more concise policy which refers to other documents is often better.
- Consult all colleagues – existing volunteers/paid staff/Trustees
- Once this is in place, it will then give you the basis to effectively manage your volunteers

Items to include within a Volunteer Policy – rather than include the whole individual policy, to allow ease of reading and understanding, it may be beneficial for the Volunteer Policy to cover the important and key information then include a link to the full, more detailed document. This is not an exhaustive list but will give you some guidance.

- Introduction
- Recruitment
- Equal Opportunities & Diversity
- Induction & Training
- Expenses

- Supervision & Support
- Insurance
- Health & Safety
- Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures
- Confidentiality

Recruiting Volunteers

Prepare – make sure you have everything in place beforehand including policies, application forms, volunteer agreements, handbooks and insurance. Also consider as part of the process, do your volunteers require a DBS check? Remember only regulated activity with vulnerable requires a DBS check, and your policies and procedures are equally as important to keep people safe. Ensure your recruiting process is laid out clearly, so it is the same for everyone.

Equality & Diversity – Volunteering should offer everyone a fair chance to contribute and avoid excluding people through labelling. You must be open to all and be prepared to make arrangements to assess and accommodate for people that may require additional needs. Including individuals from different backgrounds will help you benefit from fresh ideas and viewpoints too.

Where to find volunteers – Explore all different options and vary these according to the demographic you wish to hit – radio, local paper, social media, leaflet drop. Using a combination of all methods will broaden your reach.

Role Descriptions – have these ready so a volunteer understands their role, boundaries and who to report to.

Recruitment process – how do they apply? Registration form, references, interview/conversation, induction, review – what will work best for you?

Children & Young People – People under the age of 16 are classed as vulnerable so you must take this into account when involving them as volunteers. People over the age of 16 are free to undertake paid work so if you are referring to ‘child protection’ is usually assumed to relate to U16s. Ensure you have correct procedures in place when dealing with volunteers who are under 18 and seek advice if required.

Training Volunteers

Induction – This is the process of introducing and welcoming a volunteer to your organisation and is important as their first impressions may reflect whether they stay or not. This could include an orientation of the workplace, introductions to key people, discussion about the role, values, policies and procedures. It may be useful to use an induction checklist to ensure you cover everything.

Risk Management - you must assess any risks associated to your volunteers or anyone affected by your activities. As well as including a discussion regarding relevant risks within the induction, a written risk assessment should be created and available to view if required. Any necessary safety equipment must be provided by the organisation.

Effective and appropriate training – different types of training suit different people and roles. Training doesn't have to be as formal, and ongoing support and supervision may be just as useful. Some people may learn better from being shown how to do something rather than watching a presentation. It must be appropriate for the role and you must bear in mind a volunteer's availability. Providing opportunities and managing risks, it is important to strike the appropriate balance

Volunteering as a route to work - Volunteers who want to enhance their CVs may be keen to do as much training as they can – make sure they are not foregoing their volunteering role for training opportunities.

Managing & Retaining Volunteers

Volunteers not employees – it is very important to ensure that a volunteering role would not be considered as employment. There are many complexities of employment law, tax law, regarding those people in receipt of benefits, immigration laws and copyright law, and if you are not sure, seek some advice. Keep boundaries between the activities of staff and volunteers whilst ensuring each are equally valued. Volunteering roles should be an expectation rather than an obligation

Supervising & supporting - It is important to really get to know your volunteers so they feel supported and appreciated. This means taking time to understand what they find satisfying about volunteering and any concerns they may have about the role or the organisation. Understanding your volunteers will help you to:

- revise roles to ensure they are still relevant and valuable
- provide new opportunities for keeping volunteers involved and motivated
- enable you to continually improve how volunteers are organised.

Supervision is essential as it means that volunteers have a regular opportunity to discuss things that are happening and also bring up things that are causing them a problem – this may save a small problem developing into a more serious one, that is more difficult to deal with. This is also an opportunity for you to give them feedback on their performance

Part of the role of supporting volunteers involve **managing difficult situations** – these can be addressed effectively by not only ensuring your volunteers are properly supervised, but by having robust policies in place that you can refer to when necessary

Volunteer Policy – as discussed previously, this is your framework for managing your volunteers effectively. It will allow you to have structure and impartiality

Volunteer Co-Ordinator – a key person with the role of being a point of contact to the volunteers and help manage their activity. They are central to an organisation's success in recruiting and retaining the

volunteers needed to deliver its objectives. Co-ordinators are in addition to Leading volunteers who have an ability to

- communicate the vision of the organisation and the part volunteers play
- know their volunteers, what motivates them and how to get the best from them
- develop their volunteers, helping them move into new roles as their needs and the needs of the organisation changes.
- They should work together with the co-ordinators to be effective

Recognition & Reward - Informally, telling volunteers they are doing a great job, asking for feedback on developments, getting them involved with the social aspect of the group, are all important.

More formal opportunities such as awarding of certificates, accreditation and even inviting volunteers to be part of working groups that can shape the direction of the organisation and make them feel a valued member of the team. You could also use Volunteers Week (first week of June) as an opportunity to engage with your volunteers and advertise the good work that is being done.

Primarily, a simple thank you, will go a long way

Retaining your Volunteers – Once you have recruited your volunteer, you want to make sure they stay with you, so as part of your supervision consider speaking to them about their role – are you interesting and varied? Is there any scope to develop their role to allow them to

- Practice an existing skill or learning something new?
- Get them to meet new people
- Address a particular need
- Gain more confidence
- Try out a new role before committing to a new career

Should they decide to leave, it's a good idea to have an exit interview to establish if there had been any problems that weren't addressed, or to get some feedback on existing procedures and see if they could be improved.

Resources

Link to the Volunteering Portal - <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/voluntary-sector-support/volunteer-recruitment/>

Voluntary Norfolk Volunteering information and links - <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/voluntary-sector-support/volunteermanagement/>

Community Action Norfolk information for Good Neighbour schemes - <https://www.communityactionnorfolk.org.uk/sites/content/good-neighbour-schemes>

NCVO information about volunteer management - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/volunteer-management>



NCVO Know How Non-Profit resources:

- recruiting volunteers: <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers/recruiting>
- training volunteers: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/training>
- keeping volunteers: <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers/keeping>

Government guidance on volunteering - <https://www.gov.uk/volunteering>

Directory of Social Change ideas for making your organisation attractive to volunteers - <https://www.dsc.org.uk/content/ten-top-tips-for-making-your-organisation-attractive-to-volunteers/>

Brighton Resource Centre information about DBS checks -

<https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/disclosure-and-barring-service-dbs/>

Government tool to help to identify if a DBS check is needed <https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>

Volunteering and Benefits - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits>

Link to Volunteer Firefighter video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAQfzHBpRsc>