



A good practice guide for

Volunteer-involving Organisations

step by step
support



This guide is designed to give an overview of good practice for involving volunteers in your organisation.

Step 1

Why do you need a volunteering programme?

- Some services rely on the special nature of volunteering. It can be important that volunteers aren't paid and that they don't have to be there.
- Volunteers extend the range of work an organisation can undertake. They can contribute a range of skills that wouldn't otherwise be available.
- Volunteers bring a different perspective, reflecting the views of service users and the local community.
- Volunteers get something in return too: meeting new people, gaining skills and experience, and getting a sense of satisfaction from their volunteering.



Step 2

Develop a volunteering policy

A volunteering policy helps an organisation plan for the involvement of volunteers and ensures that volunteering is approached in a consistent way. It sets out the organisation's approach and commitment to volunteering, and it needs to be put into practice. It should be brief and should refer to other more detailed documents.

Development of a volunteering policy

Research: look at examples of policies used by other organisations (contact us if you need help with this).

Consult: ensure that everyone within the organisation contributes to the policy. This will help to ensure that all staff are committed to working with volunteers.

Write your policy: consider who it is aimed at; keep it brief and circulate drafts for comments.

Distribute: ensure everyone who need a copy gets one, including members of your board. Volunteers will also need to see the policy.

Evaluate: determine when the policy will be reviewed; assess its success and make necessary changes regularly.



Step 3

Establish systems for supporting volunteers

All organisations should support volunteers to help them fulfil their roles and potential. The extent of the support will depend on the level of involvement of the volunteer, his or her needs, the role and the amount of responsibility attached. Plans for support should be put in place before recruiting volunteers.

Volunteers should expect

An induction: an informal introduction to the organisation, its aims, staff and volunteers and the particular role.

A volunteer agreement: outlining the organisation's commitment to the volunteer and the volunteer's commitment to the organisation. It should be worded carefully to avoid creating a contract. We can help with this if needed.

Support and supervision: regular time set aside for the volunteer to discuss his or her role with the supervisor.

Training: appropriate training to enable the volunteer to fulfil the role.

Expenses: 'out of pocket' expenses such as travel costs to avoid excluding potential volunteers.

Insurance: ensure volunteers are appropriately covered.

A volunteer role description: detailing tasks the volunteer is required to perform.

Problem solving procedure: steps to be followed if a problem can't be resolved informally.

Recognition: saying 'thank you' is important.

Equal opportunities: the organisation's equal opportunities policy should include volunteers.

Health and safety procedures: organisations have a duty of care to volunteers as well as to paid staff, and volunteers should be included in the health and safety policy.

A volunteer handbook: should contain information about the organisation and policies and procedures that affect volunteers.

Step 4

Recruitment and selection of volunteers

Recruitment and selection is about ensuring a good match between the volunteer and the role. To make a good match consider what the role involves and what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to fulfil it. This information should be written down to produce a task profile or role description.

Selection procedures should involve

Application forms: basic details such as name, contact details and information that will help both the volunteer and the organisation to assess suitability for the role.

References: two references from people who are not family members or friends. Some volunteers will not have work references and this needs to be recognised.



Interviews: should be fair but informal, allowing the interviewer and volunteer to ask questions.

Health checks: should only be carried out if the volunteer's health will affect the role. You may need to know if the volunteer has a disability or health problem.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: may be needed if the volunteer will be working with children or vulnerable adults. Guidance on eligibility can be found at:
www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check
It is your responsibility to comply with any new regulations.

Risk assessments: should be completed if volunteers will be working with vulnerable people, in a position of responsibility, or carrying out activities that are potentially hazardous.

Recruitment

Different people respond to different methods of recruitment. Think about who you want to attract and the best way of reaching them (e.g. local media, leaflets in public places, word of mouth, talks and events, website and social media). It is important to recruit a diverse range of volunteers to reflect the composition of the community.

Register with Middlesbrough Volunteer Centre



Volunteer Connect

Volunteer Connect is our free online system for local people seeking volunteering opportunities and organisations seeking volunteers. Access is through our website.

www.mvda.info

Additional information

- If you collect personal data on individuals you will have to comply with the **Data Protection Act 1998**. Find out more at: www.gov.uk/data-protection
- Occasionally **volunteers can be regarded in law as employees**. To avoid creating a 'contract', organisations must have written expenses procedures in place, stating clearly that only 'out of pocket' expenses will be reimbursed.
- Written **volunteer agreements** should state clearly that they do not form a legal contract and are binding in honour only.
- **People receiving benefits** can volunteer and be paid out of pocket expenses as long as they continue to meet the conditions of their benefits. Find out more at www.gov.uk/volunteering
- **Volunteer drivers** must have a valid licence. If using their own vehicle you should check that they have appropriate insurance and MOT. Ask them to inform their insurers of the voluntary role.
- Volunteers from outside the UK, people seeking asylum, ex-offenders, young people, vulnerable people: **some issues that affect volunteers** can be complicated, but most people should be able to volunteer.
- **Volunteering should not be confused** with internships, work experience or mandatory community work placements.

Ask us for further information



Volunteer Centre
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supporting voluntary
and community action

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