

Volunteering: A Good practice guide

Information taken from

<http://brightonhovevolunteers.org.uk>

Using the guide

The Volunteering Good Practice website offers you guidelines which will allow you and your volunteers the opportunity to have a fulfilling, meaningful volunteering experience in a fair, safe and supportive environment. [Show more...](#)

Planning Planning for volunteer involvement

Recruiting Finding and Recruiting Volunteers

Supporting Supporting volunteers

Developing Developing the potential of volunteers

Evaluating Evaluating your volunteer programme

The pages following are extracts. The web link above leads to the full web site.

This is one of many such sites in the UK & the information at times is very specific to UK issues, concerns & legislation.

Planning

Is your organisation volunteer ready?

[Questions to ask before you involve volunteers](#)Careful planning is the key to building a good foundation for involving volunteers

[Diversity and Volunteering](#)

[Removing barriers to volunteering](#)

[External Factors](#)how the economic climate may affect volunteering

[Creating roles for volunteers](#)

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[Volunteer records and data protection](#)

[Insurance](#)a link to Volunteering England's information sheet

[Payment of expenses](#)

[Volunteer agreements](#)

Questions to ask before you involve volunteers

Careful planning is the key to building a good foundation for involving volunteers.

Consider the following

Is everyone in the organisation aware of plans to involve volunteers?

How will different people be affected – staff, trustees, service users, other volunteers?

Do we have the human resources to adequately support volunteers?

Are the people who will support volunteers suitably skilled and trained?

Have we budgeted the costs of involving volunteers such as payment of out of pocket expenses, training, staff costs for supervision, admin costs for DBS checks if required?

Are we able to provide roles for are rewarding for volunteers and meet the needs of the organisation?

Do we have the necessary space and resources (such as a spare desk or computer)?

Volunteers bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm and experience – are we ready for this?

Have we considered any risks associated with involving volunteers? (this includes risks to the volunteers and to the organisation)

Is our insurance cover adequate?

What policies and procedures do we already have that should be reviewed in the light of involving volunteers?

Do we need any new policies and/or procedures such as a Volunteer Policy?

When is it not appropriate to involve volunteers?

- When answers to the questions above have raised issues for the organisation that cannot be resolved
- To replace a paid member of staff
- When volunteers will be delivering a service that is usually paid for and the recipients could clearly pay

When the work is intended to make a profit

Removing barriers to volunteering

What does volunteering mean?

Volunteering occurs in many cultures, but is often performed differently from culture to culture. In Britain we have developed a great number of community-based groups or organisations focusing on volunteer activities. This phenomenon may not be representative of other societies and cultures where extended family groupings, religious groups or organisations, and government may play greater roles. Many people give a significant amount of time to help others and support their community but do not recognise this as volunteering.

Society is constantly changing. Peoples availability to volunteer and their motivations are varied. The challenge for voluntary groups and organisations in an increasingly diverse population is to provide opportunities that appeal to and engage with people from as wide a range of backgrounds and lifestyles as possible.

We need to consider how we present “volunteering” in order to reach a wide audience. Phrases such as “helping out” or “getting involved in your community” may be more easily understood.

Removing barriers to volunteering

It is important to consider if your organisation may (perhaps unwittingly) be creating barriers to some people getting involved. Organisations that are successful in attracting volunteers often under-represented in formal volunteering, (for example –younger people, older people, unemployed people, disabled people and people from black and minority ethnic communities) adopt a range of approaches, including:

- Paying out-of-pocket expenses

- Offering a variety of different types of volunteering opportunities requiring various levels of skill and commitment

- Organising transport where necessary

- Ensuring that buildings have full disabled access

- Making it clear in recruitment literature that volunteering is open to all

- Targeting recruitment campaigns at specific under-represented groups

- Adopting non-rejection policies for people who want to volunteer and linking volunteers into alternative opportunities

- Adapting roles to suit individual volunteers needs

- Employing a diverse paid staff group, thereby illustrating to potential volunteers that the organisation is committed to equal opportunities

- Providing appropriate training and support

- Minimising the amount of form filling and bureaucracy directly involving volunteers

Promoting diversity

Consider how you promote your organisation as inclusive and welcoming to all. Use words and images that convey diversity whilst

reflecting your ethos and activities. Advertise opportunities to volunteer as widely as possible using a variety of means such as leaflets, posters, Volunteering Development Agencies, internet based social networking sites and local media.

Ensure that all policies and procedures incorporate diversity, are relevant, easy to understand and simple to put into practice.

You may want to use a Diversity Statement such as the example suitable for a small organisation. It is important however that you understand what this means in practice and act on it otherwise the words are merely empty and well meaning. For example ask yourselves –

- How are differing ideas heard and valued?
- What do we do to facilitate this?
- What examples can we give of where ideas have been acted upon?

Sample Diversity Statement

Our organisation is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of our work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of our stakeholders. We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. We will regularly monitor our progress towards diversity.

Taken from “Pass It On” a good practice guide for volunteer centres – Volunteering England 2007

Creating roles for volunteers

For a successful volunteer programme the benefits need to be two way. The roles that the volunteers undertake should assist the organisation to meet its aims whilst at the same time being of benefit to the volunteer.

The key when designing new roles is to ensure that this is so. For roles to be meaningful it should be possible to describe how they contribute to the organisations overall aim.

Who should be involved in the process?

Everyone in the organisation should be aware when you introduce volunteering or when you create new roles.

Staff should be consulted, particularly when the involvement of the volunteer/s will affect their workload

Existing volunteers may have valuable insights and it is always helpful to look at roles from a volunteer's perspective

Service users/clients may have ideas about how services could be enhanced or developed with the help of volunteers

Be aware that all 3 groups could feel threatened by the introduction of new roles and may need re-assurance – for example that volunteers will not be used as a substitute for paid staff or that the quality of a service will not be less because it is delivered by volunteers

Trustees, though volunteers themselves, will through their governance role need to ensure that any organisational policies are consistent with involving volunteers and include the volunteers where appropriate

Some points to consider

- Are you able to attract a broad range of people by having opportunities that include those that can be done by any willing helper and those that are more specialised and require particular expertise?
- Is there flexibility in when the role/s can be carried out to fit in with the availability of volunteers?
- Is the role of benefit to the volunteer? How interesting/challenging is it? What will they gain through it?
- Are you able to involve volunteers who may have additional needs? What support is available? What form could this take?
- Do you have the resources available to support the role/s – supervision time, physical resources (desk, PC etc)?
- Does the nature of the role require taking up references and/or DBS checks?

Involving service users

The following information originally appeared as a resource for Capital Volunteering, a project that is now closed which was led by CSV and the London Development Centre. It was written with particular reference to users of mental health services but can be applied to a variety of other settings.

Proactively involving service users as volunteers is a decision which is as much cultural as practical, which involves a shift of perception and practice, seeing service users as potential assets and resources, not just as dependants or recipients of care.

Benefits from this approach include:

Improving individual lives – all services users, not just those doing the volunteering, can benefit from being recognised as assets, rather than being recipients of care, and users of services and resources

Offering volunteer roles which are a ‘soft’ step into mainstream volunteering for service users – in a familiar environment, or one where they feel ok about being open around any issues in their lives

Broadening services – by being more inclusive and representative of those they serve

Improving the relationship between service managers/staff and service users – engaging service users as volunteers, and therefore in delivering services, is a powerful and meaningful form of involvement

- Gaining skilled and knowledgeable volunteers – people who have experienced a particular issue themselves often have a passion and experience which makes them excellent volunteers
- Offering valuable role models to other service users for their own recovery

Much of what follows is as relevant to all volunteers, not just service user volunteers.

Top Tips

In General

- Have an outline of the role (no matter how brief) including basic tasks and skills needed. It will also help volunteering roles be seen as genuine and valuable, not tokenistic
- Boundaries and confidentiality are two areas that Service Users may need extra support in. It is not unusual for Service Users to know or have friends among the people who are using the services in which they are now volunteering; in addition to history and relationships with other volunteers and staff. Support and guidance around these areas can help prevent and deal with any issues that come up as a result

Preparation (Questions to ask before getting started)

- Are you clear about what service users will gain by taking on a volunteer role, especially if you are recruiting from within your

own service users?

- Have you communicated the benefits of involving service users as volunteers?
- Have you considered what policies and procedures you will need to amend or add in order to involve and support service users as volunteers?
- Have you discussed plans with staff and service users and addressed any issues that have come up?
- Have you identified suitable volunteer roles? Can others be created or adapted? For example, someone may have a talent for art. If there is already an art group or therapy class can they help organise it or work one to one with other service users who attend?
- Have you considered supervision needs? As with all volunteers, service users need supervision, and access to training or support around their role.

How to overcome excuses!

For many professionals, making the move to involve service users as volunteers, including people who they already support, can present a challenge. It can seem a daunting task to balance the support role, with one in which they ask the service user to take responsibility as a volunteer and undertake important roles in the organisation.

Service users may also object to being asked to take on roles without pay, especially when working alongside paid staff and with the wide practice of paying service users for their involvement on boards, or recruitment panels.

There are ways to work through objections, including:

- Give people a safe and non judgemental space to air their concerns and to think through the practical issues, even if you go ahead without everyone's enthusiasm
- Engage services and service users who have used or been volunteers to give a talk and meet people – first hand experience is often the most persuasive
- Take time to review how things are going and evaluate the quality of volunteering experience for staff and service users
- Pay expenses – people may be volunteering within a service they normally attend, but it is still volunteering and reasonable out of pocket expenses should be reimbursed
- Get support from the top – sometimes the block to progress is in a department you have no influence over; having strategic champions and top down support can help address this

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Recruiting

Where and how to recruit volunteers

Steps in the process There are 4 steps to getting a volunteer

Ways and places to recruit volunteers

Local contacts Finding local contacts for advertising opportunities

Writing a recruitment message What you offer, and how to sell it

Interviews

Safe involvement of volunteers with children and vulnerable adults

Taking up references

Screening and Checking Volunteers

Steps in the process

1. Know your opportunities

Be sure your volunteer opportunities are integral to achieving your group or organisations' aims and objectives

Prepare volunteer role descriptions which clearly explain what is involved

Acquaint yourself thoroughly with each opportunity, including its purpose, responsibilities, and what the value of the experience is for the volunteer

2. Create a clear path to your door

- Put together a process for application and screening and don't start recruiting until everything is in place
- Ensure that everyone involved in the organisation knows who to direct enquiries to
- Respond promptly. Aim to answer initial enquiries within 24 hours

3. Make your recruitment message "user-friendly"

- Produce publicity that answers the volunteer's unspoken question: "Why should I volunteer for you? not your need – "Why you should volunteer for us"
- In your publicity, answer other typical questions that new recruits ask: "What will I be doing? How often and when? Where?"
- Reassure volunteers that they will be trained and that you will support them
- Avoid words like "need" and "desperate" that scare volunteers away

4. Get your message out

Consider all available methods including word of mouth, leaflets and posters, talks and presentations, local newsletters, websites, local media coverage

Ways and places to recruit volunteers

To enable as many people as possible to access your opportunities you need to get your message out in a variety of places and formats.

Consider the following –

The Volunteer Centre

Register your opportunities at your local Volunteer Centre. To find your nearest centre use the [Volunteer Centre Finder](#)

Printed and electronic newsletters

Community, faith, school and neighbourhood newsletters

Professional association and club bulletins

Employee news sheets

Posters and leaflets

Display in doctor's surgeries, libraries, launderettes, colleges and universities, places of worship and on community notice boards

Local and national newspapers

You can pay for adverts but for free publicity you may get human interest stories about how volunteers are involved in your work and how they have personally benefitted published. Don't forget to include contact details for anyone reading it who is interested in volunteering with you. Try linking your story to a national awareness day/week or a current local issue that has been featured.

[Friday Ads](#) will place free ads for voluntary work

Social networking sites

See [Volunteer Genie](#) for information about how to use social networking sites and online communities to advertise your opportunities.

Word of Mouth

- Encouraging current volunteers and staff to tell friends and family
- Personal contact through networking opportunities (many people do not volunteer because no-one ever asked!)

Talks and presentations

- To clubs, societies and special interest groups
- Pre-retirement seminars at local employers

Community Festivals and events

Having a stall at a local event is a great way to raise the profile of your work and recruit volunteers

Employee Volunteering

Team challenges and employer supported time off to volunteer (see list of local contacts)

National volunteering events and campaigns

Link advertising your opportunities to events such as

- Volunteers Week (annually first week in June). See [Volunteering England](#) for more information
- Make a Difference Day (annually end of October) See [CSV](#) for more information

Websites

- Volunteering section on your own website
- [Do-it](#) the national volunteering database (Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove can register your opportunities for you).
- [Gumtree](#) post free ads for volunteers
- Recruitment sites

Many will post basic free ads and charge for more content

Safe involvement of volunteers with children and vulnerable adults/UK

Most volunteers enhance the lives of the groups they work with. Some may not be suited to work with vulnerable adults and children and a tiny minority may pose a threat. This information sheet summarises ways in which an organisation can help to minimise the risks and points the way towards more detailed advice and information.

Key points:

- Ensure you have appropriate policies in place for Protection of Vulnerable Adults and/or Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Review the policies annually to ensure compliance with current legislation and good practice and to ensure relevant contact details are up to date
- Ensure all volunteers are familiar with the policies and understand the impact on their roles
- Determine which roles you are legally required and/or entitled to request a [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) check for.
- Adopt consistent and effective recruitment and selection procedures for all volunteers
- Adopt work practices and codes of behaviour that minimise risks and protect both users of your group or organisation and workers
- Provide regular training

Recruitment and selection procedures

Declaring previous convictions: all applicants should be asked to declare any previous convictions or cautions and to confirm that there is no reason why they should not work with your client group. Where volunteers will be working with children, young people or vulnerable adults you can include a sentence along the lines of "Because of the type of work, involving contact with vulnerable people, you are required by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to declare all convictions including spent convictions". You should also include a statement such as "Having a conviction will not necessarily prevent you from becoming a volunteer".

You should have a procedure in place that covers what you do in the case of someone disclosing a conviction, what offences you consider would prevent someone from being suitable to volunteer with you and who makes the decision on whether or not to involve them.

References: It is recommended practice to take up written references, preferably from at least two people who are not relatives. Ideally they should be followed up verbally. Where possible one referee should have first-hand experience of the applicant's work or experience with your client group. You will probably get a more helpful reference if you explain the kind of work and ask specific questions. You should ask whether the referee has any concerns about the applicant working with your client group.

Trial period: make the appointment conditional on the successful

completion of a trial period in which you assess the suitability of the new volunteer. During this period you should offer an induction to help your new volunteer become familiar with the organisation.

DBS Checks: Please refer to the "Screening and Checking Volunteers" sheet

Safe working practices

Adopt work practices and codes of behaviour that minimise risks and protect both users of your group or organisation and workers.

Everyone in the organisation should be clear about their role, about what the organisation is trying to achieve and about the accepted codes of behaviour. They should know who they report to. Help your volunteers to carry out their duties by providing support and training. Support should include a supervision system for volunteers. This means you see them at regular intervals, either on their own or in small groups to discuss their work. Consider setting up a system of annual review. These arrangements will help you to assess general competence, the development of relationships with co-workers and your user groups and to identify any training needs. Be alert to any exceptional treatment, favourable or unfavourable, of any of your users of your group or organisation.

Where to get help

For help with writing a safeguarding children and protection of vulnerable adults policy

- [The Charity Commission](#) provides information on safeguarding children including what to cover in a child protection policy.
- [The NSPCC](#) provide a range of services concerned with child protection including information on relevant guides and publications

Supporting

Providing the right kind of support for volunteers

[Different forms of support](#)

[Induction](#)

[Supervision](#)

[Dealing with problems](#)

[Volunteering and Mental Health](#)

[Information on involving volunteers from diverse groups](#)^A

list of web based publications with links

Different forms of support

Support is vital for all volunteers and can be offered in a variety of forms. The following list gives some methods for consideration. Choose those that are most appropriate to the roles your volunteers will be undertaking.

Initial Briefing Meeting as part of Induction

This is where new volunteers have an opportunity to ask questions and find out the where, what, who, why, how and when of the group or organisation. You may want to involve other people at this stage, as it is a good time to introduce other volunteers, staff and members of the Management Committee

Peer to peer support and buddying

New volunteers can be paired with those more experienced. Volunteers with additional support needs, such as a learning disability could receive ongoing support from being paired with someone from within the organisation or through an external volunteering support scheme where this exists

Volunteer Meetings

Regular meetings for volunteers to talk and discuss the project, what they are doing and ideas for development. Members of the group can offer one another support and reassurance, as well as develop friendships and group identity.

Informal Support

Regular opportunities for chats and get-togethers, between volunteers and volunteers/staff, at meetings, socials or in the office.

One to One Support

Regular contact time for volunteers with a paid worker/member of management team to discuss how things are going, deal with difficult situations or offload.

Formal supervision

Regular one to one or group sessions following a structured process with a paid worker/member of management team. An opportunity for both parties to discuss progress, contribute ideas and plan work

Others

Consider any opportunities to get together are opportunities for support – Annual General Meetings, social events, meetings with link groups or organisations, professionals, staff, training events and celebration events.

Induction

Induction is the process of preparing volunteers for a clear relationship with the organisation. It should make volunteers feel comfortable and ensure they understand the group/organisation's history, ethos, structure and procedures, so that they will contribute productively to the organisation's work and have a positive volunteering experience. Even if a volunteer is already highly skilled, induction is essential.

Induction should provide answers to three questions:

Why should I be working here? (what is the 'cause' all about?)

How will I be working here? (what are the volunteer management systems?)

Where do I fit in with everyone else? (what is the social environment in which I'll work?)

The induction process falls into two parts.

- **orientation**:- the process of preparing volunteers for a relationship with the group/organisation
- **training**:- the process of preparing the volunteer to perform work for the group/organisation

Every volunteer should know they will be required to attend an orientation and/ or training session. Orientation is distinguished from training in that it is usually more general and informal, providing information every volunteer should know. Training is designed to equip volunteers with the specific skills and knowledge required by their role.

The problem of volunteers leaving an organisation soon after being recruited is often due to poor induction procedures. Induction must be relevant and interesting. Small group induction coupled with a volunteer handbook is often very effective.

It may also be helpful to use an induction checklist as a record for the organisation and the volunteer of what was covered.

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Supervision

The style and frequency of supervision will depend to a large extent on the roles that volunteers do. Counsellors for example will require regular formal clinical supervision by a suitably qualified person. Other roles will require a less formal arrangement but it is good practice to have some form of regular supervision in place. In determining the frequency consider the following –

number of hours that the volunteer works

the nature and demands of the role

How long the volunteer has been involved

It is important that all volunteers who work similar hours in similar roles have the same supervision arrangements. Volunteers may not to see the need for supervision, particularly if it involves an extra commitment outside of their usual volunteering hours. It helps to explain that it is two way and as much for their benefit as the organisations'. Help them to see it as their personal time to give feedback and receive input not as you checking up on them.

Remember that volunteers may be extremely competent in their role and may also have been with the organisation for longer than many staff. Try to arrange sessions at times when they would usually volunteer. If it has to be outside of this then make it clear that travel expenses will be reimbursed and try to be as flexible as possible about time and location. A telephone call at a mutually agreed time may be an acceptable option.

Aims of a supervision session

For the group or organisation to gain

- An improved understanding of the tasks and issues involved in volunteering for each part of the group or organisation
- A perception of how things are going
- To hear the volunteers views and ideas of the development of the group or organisation

For the volunteer to gain

- Direction from the volunteer coordinator, Management Committee or Trustees
- Feedback on their work
- Support and advice

Running the session

- Set aside enough time to ensure that everything is covered
- Make sure you will not be interrupted
- Choose an appropriate venue – this does not have to be your office. Consider a meeting place convenient for the volunteer such as a local coffee shop
- Keep notes of what was discussed and let volunteers have a copy

Using self evaluation as part of supervision

People learn best when they see for themselves what needs to change. The questions you ask during supervision can prompt this process. Include questions such as –

- What has gone well/what do you like about what you did?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What support do you need from me/others?

Giving feedback

Part of the session will also involve giving feedback on a volunteers work. Useful, constructive feedback should be

- Specific
- Descriptive
- Remedy-seeking as opposed to blame seeking
- Well-timed and current

Checked for understanding

Dealing with problems

The general aim that volunteering is a positive experience for everyone involved is frequently met. There are occasions however when problems may arise. The information sheet covers what to do when a volunteer raises a concern or complaint and how to handle any concerns or complaints that you may have about a volunteer.

Preventing problems

You can minimise problems occurring in the first place by ensuring that you have planned well for volunteer involvement. Attention should be paid to the following –

Know why you are involving volunteers

Have meaningful roles with enough work to sustain interest

Take care in matching volunteers to roles – find out what they hope to achieve through volunteering so that you can be sure that the role is appropriate

Have clear expectations on both sides

Provide any necessary training

Ensure that you have appropriate support in place

Provide opportunities for volunteers to raise their views and contribute to decision making

Being prepared

You should have clear procedures in place for dealing with problems that may arise. It is not advisable to use the same discipline and grievance procedures that you have for staff as these have been developed to satisfy employment legislation which does not cover volunteers. The procedures you use will however be based on similar principles of fairness. You may include these within your Volunteer Policy or it may refer to a separate policy. Either way they should be written in plain English that is easy to understand.

Dealing with complaints

All complaints should be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to

- Protect your volunteers
- Minimise any risk of disruption to your staff, service users and other volunteers
- Demonstrate that your organisation respects its volunteers
- Protect the reputation of your organisation

Complaints from volunteers

Volunteers should have the right to complain if they feel that they have been unfairly treated. Whilst they have no legal rights as they are not employees there is a strong moral case for implementing good practice. The procedure should follow 3 stages

Oral complaint

This is the initial discussion and may be informal in nature. Many complaints can be resolved at this stage. Your procedure will say who an initial complaint should be raised with – the Volunteer Co-ordinator or the person who supervises the volunteer for example. If the complaint is about this person then it should be referred to another

manager.

Written complaint

If the problem is not satisfactorily resolved then it should be raised in writing. Your procedures should set a timeframe for this. A month should be plenty of time for someone to decide whether to continue with their complaint. The organisation likewise should respond within a given timeframe.

You should take account of the fact that some volunteers may have difficulty submitting something in writing so be prepared to be flexible and offer support where appropriate

Right to appeal

There should be a further stage for volunteers who are not satisfied with the outcome of their written complaint. This will generally be to the Management Committee or Trustees, most usually addressed to the Chair. Again there should be specified timeframes. The Chair's decision on the matter will be final.

Addressing problems with volunteers

The sort of issues that you may need to address with volunteers include

- Persistent bad time keeping
- Going beyond the boundaries of the agreed role
- Not respecting service users confidentiality/dignity/independence and individuality
- Breach of health and safety regulations or agreements
- Misuse of the organisations equipment or facilities
- Theft
- Discrimination on grounds of disability/ethnicity/religion/gender/sexuality/age
- Abuse or other offensive behaviour
- Arriving for work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse

Many issues such as not fitting in as well as expected with the team or being unreliable should be picked up and dealt with during regular supervision. It may be possible to resolve these without resorting to formal procedures.

Oral discussion

- Start by chatting with the volunteer about a whole range of issues that may be influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. Often they may not realise that they are doing anything wrong and can't be expected to change if a particular issue isn't brought to their attention
- Supply volunteers with a well thought out induction pack, volunteer policy and role description. Remind them of the policies ground rules etc of the organisation
- Check if they have training needs
- Do they need extra support or supervision?
- Are they unfulfilled in their current role? Have their needs changed, or would they like to use different skills to help the

organisation? If so you could modify their role description, ask them if they would like to work in another department or develop a completely new role for them

- Is the volunteer suffering from burnout or unable to cope with the demands of the role anymore? They may need a break from volunteering or may prefer to volunteer in another organisation for a while
- Keep notes of any meetings where problems are discussed

Written warning

If the issue is not resolved at the oral stage or review

- Give the volunteer a written warning outlining your reason for the complaint
- Allow them to state their case, which could be to the Volunteer Coordinator or a senior member of staff and to be accompanied by a person of their choice
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set and help offered to the volunteer
- If you decide to dismiss the volunteer they should have the right to appeal
- The decision to dismiss should be a last resort

Right to appeal

If a volunteer has been dismissed

- They should have the right to appeal in writing to a member of the Management Committee, usually the Chair
- Sometimes a sub-committee can be formed specifically to hear appeals
- The volunteer should be allowed to have a nominated person present at any appeal meeting
- The Chair or sub-committee must respond within a time specified in the organisation's problem solving procedure and their decision is final

Dismissing a volunteer

By this stage the volunteer will have had opportunity to put their case forward. Further debate is unhelpful. An unequivocal message has to be imparted to the volunteer. For this reason it may be better if it comes from someone with a degree of seniority within the organisation.

Bear in mind the following good practice tips

- Make sure the dismissal meeting takes place in a private setting
- Be quick and direct
- Decide what you are going to say in advance and do not back down.
At this stage the decision to dismiss a volunteer has already been made
- Do not attempt to counsel the volunteer as this will send confusing messages to them
- Expect the volunteer to express their emotions but keep your emotions in check
- Follow up the meeting with a letter, re-iterate the decision to

dismiss the volunteer as well as outlining the reasons why.

Include any information relating to their departure

- Inform staff, service users and other volunteers of the outcome but do not give reasons for the dismissal
- If the volunteer had responsibilities for certain clients make sure that the clients are informed of the new volunteer who will be assigned to them

Under what circumstances should volunteers be suspended immediately?

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately, while an investigation is carried out. These include but are not limited to acts that constitute gross misconduct such as

- Theft
- Assault
- Acts of violence
- Malicious damage
- Deliberate falsification of documents
- Harassment
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

This information is drawn from Pass it on – A good practice resource produced by Volunteering England for Volunteer Centres

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Developing

Demonstrating the value you place on volunteers and helping them reach their potential

[Sustaining volunteer involvement](#)

[Recognising and rewarding the work of volunteers](#)

[Training and accreditation](#)

[Getting your training accredited](#)

Sustaining volunteer involvement

Sustaining a volunteer's involvement in your organisation is beneficial for a number of reasons

It is likely to provide a better service for your clients who may be unsettled by constant changes in personnel.

- It is cost effective, saving on recruitment, training and other costs of involving new volunteers
- It gives the volunteer the time to become fully competent with any new skills learned
- It increases a sense of team working

Retention for its own sake, however is not necessarily an indicator of success. Volunteers move on for all sorts of reasons and to equip them with the necessary skills and confidence to do this is a valid aim for some organisations, particularly those who may involve volunteers from socially excluded groups.

Strategies for retaining volunteers

- Ensure everyone in the organisation knows why you involve volunteers
- Ensure staff know exactly what the volunteers will be doing
- Have a clear volunteer policy
- Ensure that there is a thorough induction process
- Use role descriptions and only change after consultation with the volunteer
- Give regular time for supervision
- Get to know your volunteers
- Make sure you have ways of supporting volunteers who want to take on new responsibilities
- Plan ways to recognise and reward your volunteers
- Have a training programme
- Involve volunteers in decision making

Recognising and rewarding the work of volunteers

- Remember a volunteer's name, and use it when you greet them
- Don't forget to say 'thank you'
- Be interested in their personal lives and problems
- Celebrate major achievements – perhaps with an award ceremony to which you invite prominent local people
- Ensure they have a way of taking part in the decision making processes
- Ask them to make presentations at meetings
- Offer training and progression
- Bring food to volunteers meetings
- Nominate them for community awards
- Mention volunteers input at meetings, in the Annual Report, in your newsletter on your website etc
- Remember their birthdays and send them a card
- If they need equipment to carry out their role make sure it works and it is as up to date as you can afford
- Keep a file of specific accomplishments so that you can use the facts when needed
- Use special days – Volunteers' Week & Make a Difference Day' to publicise their work and time put in
- Organise a social event, outing or party to say thank you

Key points

- Make sure any way you choose of recognising and rewarding fits the type of achievement and the volunteer concerned – make it personal and meaningful
- Be honest and sincere – most people can see through superficial praise
- Be consistent and fair – don't have different rules for different people
- Make sure the paid staff are fully aware of how important volunteers are to your organisation and ensure they have some training in managing volunteers

Training and accreditation

Some volunteers value the provision of training enormously, regarding it as an essential part and tangible benefit of their volunteering experience. In these cases, training will undoubtedly increase volunteer confidence and satisfaction.

However, others may not see the need for training, or even if they do, they may find the idea very off-putting (possibly because it reminds them of unhappy school days). If this is the case, the need for training must be 'sold' with great sensitivity. In all instances, training must be well-planned and appropriate to the needs of the group or organisation and to the needs of the individual volunteer.

The training process takes time, effort and requires an input of resources. So why do it?

Training demonstrates that the group/organisation believes in a high standard of work

Training lessens the likelihood of mistakes and other problems

Some group/organisations use training courses as a part of their volunteer selection procedure

Training allows new volunteers to learn about the group/organisation and their specific tasks

Training also allows existing volunteers to perform their roles better and to take on new work as the group/organisation changes

Training gives volunteers an opportunity to learn about the political, social and economic setting in which the group/organisation operates

Training can heighten personal skills and awareness, so the volunteers can function more effectively as individuals and therefore do their voluntary work more successfully

It can also improve interpersonal and group awareness, so volunteers can both work more effectively with colleagues and deal more sensitively with the group/organisation's client group

Providing standardised training can ensure consistency in approach by different volunteers and continuity over time.

Training helps to minimise risk (for example, health and safety training)

Design of Training

Determining what training a volunteer may need requires answering three questions.

- what information do they need to successfully perform the work?
- what skills do they need to successfully perform the work?
- what attitudes or approaches do they need to successfully perform the work?

Training to provide this information, develop these skills and engender these attitudes can be provided in a variety of ways. It may be done in-house, externally, or jointly with other groups/organisations, and includes –

- On-the-job training
- Practical demonstrations

- Work shadowing
- Buddying/mentoring systems
- Visiting other organisations/inviting outside organisations
- Attending conferences, workshops, lectures, seminars, etc.
- Role plays and simulations
- Problem-solving exercises, group discussions, brainstorming, etc.
- Speakers and films at meetings
- One-off training sessions of varying lengths
- Telephone conferencing
- Linked or modular courses, consisting of several sessions over a period of time
- Distance and online learning
- Structured reading programmes.

It is recommended that a variety of techniques are used, which combine listening, discussing, observing and doing, as this will help to maintain attention and interest.

Evaluating

Seeing how well you are doing and making plans for improvement

Evaluation is often placed at the end (as here) – however it should be an action which occurs almost before anything happens. The first question is ‘why do we wish to do anything?’ That is ‘evaluation’ & to develop any effective action such questions need to be constantly presented. Once the aims and purpose have been established those involved should constantly be reviewing (informally by at least ‘conversations’ and when necessary, formally) to ensure they are remaining true to their intentions – and adjusting action (and even purposes) as necessary

[Monitoring and evaluating your volunteer programme](#)

[Tools for evaluation](#)

[Monitoring diversity](#)

[Working out the economic cost of volunteering](#)

Monitoring and evaluating your volunteer programme

There is a wealth of information available on the subjects of monitoring and evaluation. This information sheet is intended as a brief introduction, specific to monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme. It is based on self evaluation – that is using your organisations own people, skills and resources to carry out the task.

Why monitor and evaluate a volunteer programme?

To measure to what extent you are meeting any specific aims of your volunteer programme

To determine the quality of the volunteers' experience within your organisation

To demonstrate the impact that volunteers have on your organisation, both in terms of their contribution and their economic value

To identify areas in your volunteer programme that may need improvement

Funders may require you to monitor and evaluate your volunteer programme

Definitions

Monitoring is the process for collecting the facts and figures related to your volunteer programme. This will include such things as

- Numbers of volunteers
- Demographic information (age, ethnicity etc)
- Records showing how often and for how long people volunteer
- The type of work that volunteers do
- The economic value of volunteer's contributions
- The costs of involving volunteers

Monitoring information can be used to evidence your **outputs** (the things you do and the services you provide)

Evaluation involves using information you have collected to answer questions about how well the volunteer programme is doing, to identify any gaps and improvements you can make and to demonstrate your **outcomes** (the difference that involving volunteers makes). It will involve analysis of monitoring information (quantitative or "hard" data) and any feedback, case studies, volunteer experiences etc (qualitative or "soft" data).

What do we need to know?

You can count and ask questions about any number of things. There is skill required in only counting and asking about what is most useful to know. The sort of questions you may want answers to include –

- How diverse are our volunteers?
- How successful are our recruitment methods?
- How well do we retain volunteers?
- Are volunteers properly supported?
- Are our policies and procedures relevant?
- How does the training we provide enhance the volunteer experience?

- How much do volunteers contribute towards the organisation?
- How has volunteer involvement benefited our service users?

Once you have identified the information you need, the next step is to work out the best method of obtaining it.

Collecting evidence

Monitoring statistics can be collected from a variety of sources including – application forms, equality and diversity monitoring forms, volunteer timesheets and training records

Information about the quality of the volunteering experience and the difference that it makes will involve collecting feedback from stakeholders including volunteers, staff and service users

Using your findings

Once you have collected the evidence you will need to analyse and interpret it. For outputs, this might include: Did you meet the targets you set for volunteer recruitment? Are your volunteers from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds?

What about your outcomes? Did you achieve what you set out to do, or were there some unexpected outcomes eg did some volunteers leave to take up paid employment using the skills and experience they learned and developed as volunteers?

You may need to write up your conclusions based on the evidence you have found. When interpreting information, consider if there are any other possible explanations for your findings. Once you have identified gaps, you need to focus on how to make improvements.

These need to be realistic, specific and achievable. This may be a good opportunity to review targets for outputs and outcomes.

Volunteer meetings can be a good way of discussing how improvements and changes can be made to your volunteering programme. This will make your volunteers feel involved in the process, and will help you to develop methods to implement the changes. All decisions should be recorded in the minutes of your meetings.

Tools for evaluation

How you gather feedback to inform your evaluation will be determined by the a number of factors including –

How many volunteers you have

How long they stay with you

How often you see them face:face

Any support needs they might have

What kind of information you want

Use methods that are appropriate for your volunteers and your project. The following table lists some common methods to choose from

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Volunteer questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be completed in private • Large numbers can be distributed using email and post • Can incorporate a variety of questions including tick box Yes/No answers and those more open in style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often have a low response rate • Not good for volunteers with low literacy skills • Can tend to reveal superficial information rather than in depth views
Online Survey (eg Survey Monkey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Free (at a basic level) • Professional appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Only useful if you are sure all volunteers have internet access
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be useful for getting a range of views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be a typical group as only those who are confident may take part or contribute • Needs a facilitator and prepared questions
1:1 interview surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good response rate • Good for volunteers with low literacy skills or fear of bureaucratic form filling • Allows in depth discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive in interview time • Will need to sample if organisation has large numbers of volunteers
Case studies		
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for "a day in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people are

	<p>life of..." style presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not dependant on literacy skills • Can involve volunteers in operating the equipment 	<p>camera shy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be intrusive • May end up with large amounts of unedited material that is difficult to interpret • Technical quality may be poor
Written diaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide evidence of change over a given time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs clear structure to obtain the right kind of information
Suggestions and complaints boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East to organise • Good for demonstrating commitment to obtaining volunteers views • Comments can be anonymous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments may be very wide ranging and difficult to interpret • Often have poor response rate
Feedback forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful after volunteer events or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be intimidating • Need to structure time for completion into the session
Exit interviews/questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential to allow volunteers opportunity to feedback on their experience 	

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