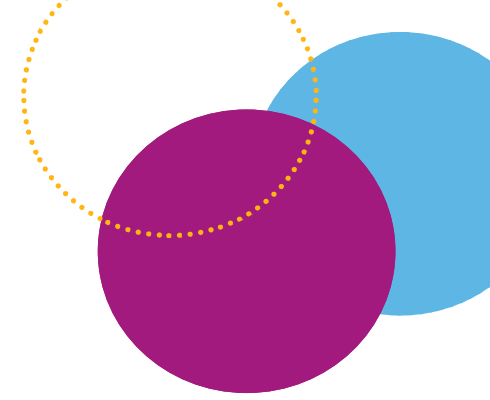


Saying goodbye



Volunteers leave for many reasons – because of changes in their personal circumstances, caring responsibilities, to take a paid job, because they move house or leave the area, or just because they want to pursue other interests or priorities.

Of course, others may leave because they are bored or de-motivated or unhappy with their experience. Have you considered why volunteers may be leaving your organisation?

It's a good idea to have an 'exit strategy' for volunteers, both those who have just dropped out and those who have given you notice that they will be leaving. This could be as simple as deciding how you will ask for feedback from all volunteers when they leave. It will help you to find out if there are similar reasons for volunteers leaving and if there is anything you might need to change.

Even if your volunteer opportunities are short term or time-limited, it is still a good idea to ask for feedback from volunteers who have taken part.

A written procedure for what happens when volunteers leave may be helpful in larger teams or projects, but even in smaller organisations just recognising the need to 'complete' the volunteer experience helps the volunteer to:

- Feel able to move on without feeling guilty
- Be thanked in some way for the contribution they have made
- Know that they will be made welcome if they want to return later on
- Have the opportunity to make any comments or suggestions

You could do this with a phone call, or by having an exit interview, or by sending a thank you letter and feedback form.

Volunteers' reasons for leaving – and suggestions that they make – should be recorded somewhere, and evaluated at regular intervals, so that you can note any recurring themes and make sure they feed in to future plans or developments.

If volunteers have had a good experience volunteering with your organisation, you can still benefit from the investment you made in them, even after they've left. Volunteers will talk to other people about their experiences and this can be a great way of getting new volunteers on board. Volunteers who have left may also be happy for you to use their comments, testimonies or photos in your recruitment materials – why not ask them?