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Application and selection

Selecting volunteers is about finding a good match between the volunteer and the opportunity on offer. It is an attempt to find a successful blend where the person has the right skills or experience for the role, and the opportunity satisfies the needs and interests of the volunteer.

Lack of care in recruitment and selection can lead to dissatisfaction and disappointment for both the individual and the organisation.

Strong selection procedures are particularly important if your organisation provides services or activities for under 18s or adults who may be vulnerable. In this case, your selection procedures should be part of your organisation's overall approach to safeguarding, alongside systems for good support, supervision, training and dealing with concerns/allegations. See the Safeguarding section on **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'** for further sources of help and advice on working with vulnerable people.

Application and selection procedures could include any or all of the following. The methods you choose to assess suitability should be appropriate for the role and the nature of the work you want volunteers to undertake:

- Application or registration form
- Informal chat / structured interview
- References
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- Trial or training period

Record keeping

However informal or short-term the volunteer opportunity, even if you don't need a formal selection or screening process, it is wise to ask for and keep a record of:

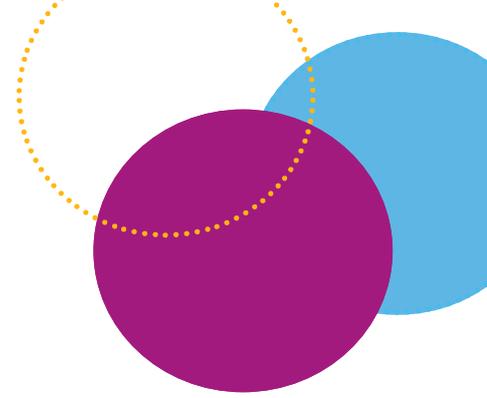
- The volunteer's name and contact details
- Details of an emergency contact
- Information about any health conditions or allergies which their supervisor or colleagues might need to know about to keep them safe whilst volunteering

You may find it useful to collect statistical information on the demographic profile of your volunteers. An anonymous monitoring form is a way of collecting information about volunteers age range, gender, ethnic background etc in a way that does not link the information to individuals in an identifiable way.

Application / registration form

Try to ensure that forms are as simple as possible and only ask for the information you need, proportionate to the type of work you do. For some roles (eg working with vulnerable clients) you may need more detailed background information than for others.

Application forms can give potential volunteers an opportunity to tell you about their experience in relation to the role and their reasons for volunteering, and also provide you with a basic personnel record. Some volunteers may need help to complete forms – this is especially important to consider if you are offering roles where literacy skills are not actually required in order to do the work.



Interview or informal chat?

You need to get the right balance between professionalism and informality, so that the experience gives the volunteer confidence that the organisation is efficient and well-organised, but is not so intimidating that it scares them away! See **Sheet 8 'Interviews and references'** for more guidance and tips.

Criminal record checks

For organisations providing services or activities for children, young people under 18 or adults at risk, there may be additional checks to run when recruiting to roles where volunteers will have close contact with these groups.

See **Sheet 9 'Disclosure and Barring Service'** for more information. To find out if the work you do is 'regulated activity', see the guidance issued by the DBS on their website at <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-check-applicant-criminal-record> or contact your local Volunteer Centre for help.

Trial period

For some types of role, you may want to have a 'trial period' for new volunteers. This can be as much about you assessing their suitability as it is about them finding out if the role is what they want to do. It is important to agree a timescale for a review of the trial period right at the start of the volunteer's involvement, and for each of you to understand the purpose of the trial period, and the review meeting.

Saying 'no'

Sometimes there may be a good reason why you are unable to accept someone's offer to volunteer. The best way to handle this is to let them know quickly and explain why. It may be tempting to avoid the issue and hope that they will lose interest, but this gives a poor image of your organisation and of volunteering in general.

Let the person know that you appreciate their offer and explain your reasons for having to turn them down. Try to give them some constructive feedback about how to improve their chances of volunteering. It's important to handle this sensitively – think how upsetting it is to be rejected after a job interview, and how much more so when the person is offering to work for nothing. Make a point of referring them to your local Volunteer Centre to explore other options.