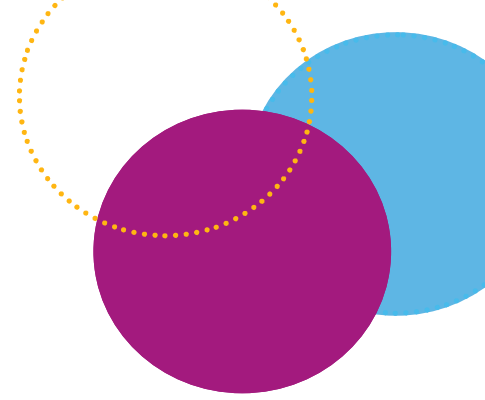




**Volunteer Centres**  
Lincolnshire

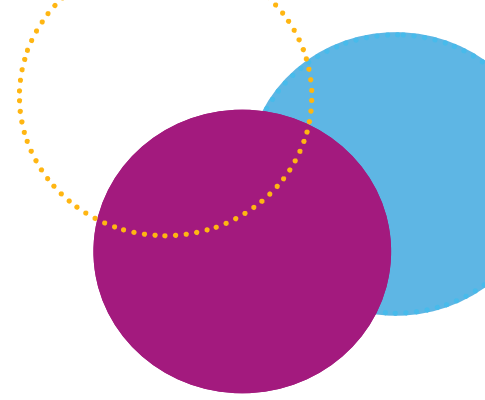


# Involving Volunteers: Good Practice Guide

**Volunteer Centres Lincolnshire**



**Voluntary**   
**CENTRE Services**



### **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to Voluntary Action LeicesterShire for allowing us to use their 'Good Practice Guide to Involving Volunteers' to provide much of the source material for this Guide, and to Renaissance London for allowing us to use some of their Frequently Asked Questions about Volunteer Centres.

**Updated Summer 2021**



Find Volunteer Centres Lincolnshire at [www.lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk](http://www.lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk)



# Contents and introduction



## Contents and checklist

	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Who this Guide is for</b>	<b>1</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>What is volunteering?</b>	<b>2</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Why involve volunteers? - Volunteer Policy</b>	<b>3</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Developing a volunteer role</b>	<b>4</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Volunteer role template</b>	<b>5</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Getting volunteers on board</b>	<b>6</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Application and selection</b>	<b>7</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Interviews and references</b>	<b>8</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Safeguarding and criminal record checks</b>	<b>9</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Induction and training</b>	<b>10</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Support and supervision</b>	<b>11</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Volunteer expenses</b>	<b>12</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Keeping volunteers</b>	<b>13</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>One-off events</b>	<b>14</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Event planning checklist</b>	<b>15</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Dealing with problems</b>	<b>16</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Saying goodbye</b>	<b>17</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How can Volunteer Centres help?</b>	<b>18</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Volunteer Centres – frequently asked questions</b>	<b>19</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How to find out more</b>	<b>20</b>

## Why not use this page as your Good Practice Checklist?

Use the column on the left to tick the things you are confident about.  
This will help you identify any areas for development.



## Introduction

This Guide is a series of introductory information sheets designed to help organisations find and manage volunteers more effectively.

The recruitment and management of volunteers is not dissimilar to the recruitment and management of staff, but unlike paid staff, volunteers have few reasons to stay if they do not enjoy their work, so it is important that they are supported and managed well. One bad experience can put people off volunteering, sometimes permanently. Good volunteering experiences on the other hand, can bring immeasurable benefits – for the volunteer, the organisation, the people they work with and society as a whole.

The aim of this Guide is to give you some simple guidelines and practical suggestions which will help you to attract, involve and support volunteers effectively, and have a plan in place for when they move on.

The Guide has been produced by Volunteer Centres Lincolnshire, a partnership of the charitable organisations that run the county's Volunteer Centres. This partnership is made up of **Lincolnshire CVS** based in the south of the county; and Urban Challenge which runs **Voluntary Centre Services** from three offices in the west area, including Lincoln city.

Details of how to contact your nearest Volunteer Centre are on **Sheet 18 'How can Volunteer Centres help?'** or visit the Lincolnshire Volunteering website at the bottom of this page.

## Who this Guide is for

This Guide is for anyone who finds themselves with responsibility for volunteers, but particularly if managing volunteers is not the main part of your role.

- Perhaps you organise events and only need volunteers occasionally?
- Perhaps you run a small group or club and would like to get more people to help you?
- Perhaps you are starting a new project involving volunteers and want to get things right from the start?
- Perhaps you don't involve volunteers at the moment, but think it might be a good idea?

Very few organisations can afford to employ a dedicated volunteers manager. In most organisations, particularly small ones, the person responsible for volunteers combines this with many other roles. Many people who take on the role of volunteer manager are themselves volunteers.

If this sounds familiar, then this Guide is for you.



# What is volunteering?

There is no single legal definition of what volunteering actually is or what types of activity it includes. Amongst the various definitions that may be used there are some common themes - things like choice, non-payment and community benefit.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations says that volunteering is:

“Volunteering is someone spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone who they’re not closely related to. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.”

Or, from an individual perspective, as expressed by volunteering co-ordinator and writer Ivan Scheier:

“Volunteering is doing more than you have to, because you want to, in a cause you consider good.”

Whatever the definition, there seem to be some common principles fundamental to volunteering:

**Choice:** Freedom to volunteer also means freedom not to become involved.

**Open to everyone:** Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what a person’s background. Anyone can do good things for others.

**Mutual Benefit:** Volunteers offer their time unpaid, but they should benefit in other ways, such as gaining a sense of wellbeing, satisfaction or achievement, social contact, enjoyment, learning new skills etc.

**Recognition:** Recognition of the value of the contribution of volunteers is important. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

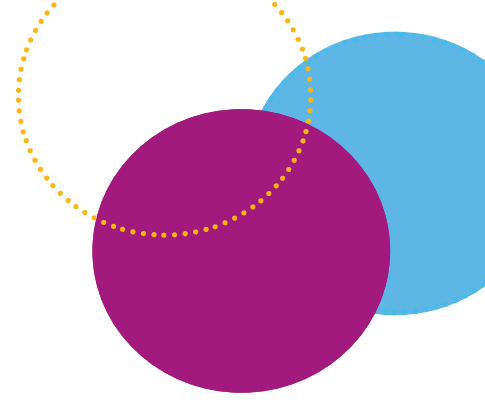
Regular volunteering can take many forms, from simple informal acts of kindness to highly structured or specialist roles, across a whole range of sectors including care, health, environment, sport, arts, music, culture/heritage, advice, education and more.

Microvolunteering is one-off, short activities that benefit society or the environment. These activities may take anything from a few seconds up to an hour and could include sharing a charity’s campaign material, playing online games that raise cash, crafts such as knitting baby clothes for premature babies, taking part in ‘citizen science’ such as counting wild birds in your garden.

Employer-supported volunteering is where businesses enable their staff to give time to the community through their workplace. This may be by authorising additional time or granting specific leave for people to volunteer, or group / team tasks, or as ‘pro bono’ time given by professionally qualified staff to benefit community causes.

# 2

## Why involve volunteers?



There are many great reasons why an organisation may involve volunteers in its work. It is worth bearing in mind that involving volunteers effectively is an investment. It takes willingness and resources such as the time to recruit, manage and support people, provide workspace and equipment, and reimburse out-of-pocket expenses.

### So why make this investment?

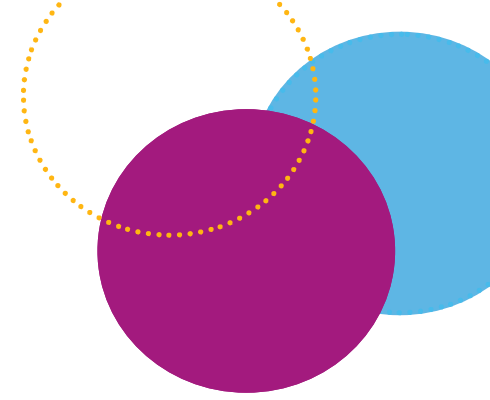
- Enable your organisation to reach more people, or offer more support or services to your users
- Widen participation, involve more diverse groups of people, enable greater local input. Volunteers can help keep your organisation relevant by contributing a range of ideas and views
- Fresh perspectives, energy and enthusiasm
- Raise awareness of your cause and help to promote what you do
- Volunteers have a different relationship with your users than that of staff, and it can be good to know they are there because they want to be - not just because it is their job
- Volunteers bring a variety of skills, experience and enthusiasm - particularly valuable for smaller organisations that may not be able to pay for such expertise
- Volunteers can add credibility to an organisation – people giving their time suggests that the work must be of value

If you're new to involving volunteers, set up for success by making sure you start with positive reasons. Avoid taking on volunteers just to do those tasks that no-one else wants to do, and don't fall into the trap of thinking of volunteers as a cheap substitute for paid staff. Volunteering is all about mutual goodwill.

Plan ahead before recruiting volunteers:

- Be clear about your reasons for wanting to involve volunteers
- Think about why people might want to volunteer, and why they should choose your organisation
- Define the roles and responsibilities that volunteers will take on
- Establish that you have enough resources to support volunteers
- Be prepared to explain how and why volunteers will contribute to the overall aims and objectives of the organisation

If funding or finding resources to support your volunteers is a problem, talk to your local voluntary sector support and development organisation (find contact details via [www.lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk](http://www.lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk)) for advice about how to incorporate the costs of volunteer management into your funding applications and project bids. Most funders will see it as a legitimate part of your overall budget.



### **Volunteering is most likely to work well if:**

- The organisation has clear reasons for involving volunteers
- You are prepared to spend time acknowledging and recognising what they contribute
- Trustees, managers, staff, volunteers and service users understand why volunteers are there, and appreciate what they bring
- The roles of volunteers are clearly defined, so that paid staff do not feel undermined or threatened and volunteers feel secure about what they are doing
- There is an organisational culture which values the involvement of volunteers and makes sure it has the resources to support them properly
- You have something to offer volunteers, for example the chance to make a real difference, a great training programme, getting out in the fresh air, learning new skills, staying active, meeting new people, a change of direction, a sense of satisfaction.

# 3

## Planning for involving volunteers - Volunteer Policy

Larger organisations, especially those that have paid staff, tend to have a written volunteer policy and associated procedures.

Smaller organisations may not need a full policy but it is a good idea to have discussed and agreed a plan for involving volunteers that covers the principles set out below.

### Why have a volunteer policy?

A volunteer policy or plan helps your organisation to set out the terms under which you will involve volunteers. It doesn't need to be a lengthy document, but it will help your trustees, managers, staff and volunteers to understand the reasons for involving volunteers, the types of activities they will carry out, and how they will be supported. A policy should be created with the involvement of leaders, staff and volunteers at all levels and will need to be reviewed regularly, to ensure it reflects the organisation's ethos around volunteering.

### Your policy or plan may include:

- The reasons / ethos behind volunteer involvement
- Information about the organisation - its mission or purpose
- How volunteers will be recruited, and the selection process
- How volunteers will be welcomed and introduced to the organisation
- How volunteers will be supported and supervised
- Opportunities for volunteer development and training
- The range of volunteering opportunities available
- Your approach to volunteer expenses
- How you will manage risks and protect people from harm, eg health and safety, insurance, etc
- How you will deal with any problems that may arise
- What happens when a volunteer moves on from your organisation

You may also wish to include other relevant information, statements or links to other policies if you have them, such as:

- Equality and diversity
- Safeguarding
- DBS checks and criminal record information (where applicable)
- Health and safety procedures

### Where can I get some help?

Information and guidance on planning for volunteer involvement or drafting a volunteer policy is available from your local Volunteer Centre. Whilst sample policies can be helpful, and are easily downloaded, we encourage you to think the process through, so that your policy reflects your specific set of circumstances and your organisation's values.



# 4

## Before you recruit

People who want to volunteer have a wide range of opportunities to choose from. They tend to choose the opportunity that offers the best 'fit' to their personal motivations and interests.

Before you recruit, think about how you can make your organisation appealing for potential volunteers. What are the benefits of volunteering for your organisation in particular? Ask yourself:

- **What do you do and how is it inspiring?**  
Feeling connected to a cause or your organisation's specific purpose can be a strong motivation.
- **What makes your group unique?**  
What would make a volunteer choose you rather than another organisation with a similar mission?
- **What development opportunities can you offer?**  
What is interesting, exciting or challenging about the roles that you can offer? How could your volunteering opportunity help someone develop professionally or gain experience? For example, could volunteers access training, develop management skills or work directly with your users?
- **How could being part of your organisation benefit a volunteer?**  
Some people volunteer to help build confidence, give life a bit of structure or because they want a sense of belonging. Others may be coming to it after a period of illness, isolation or caring for family members. Perhaps you can offer a friendly, supportive environment where volunteers feel part of a team.

Everyone is different, and reasons for volunteering will vary. Give some thought as to what sort of motivations might fit well with the opportunities you have. Some volunteers will relish a challenge, others may prefer something where they don't need to think too hard. Some volunteers want to learn or gain experience, others may have years of experience or professional skills and want to give something back.

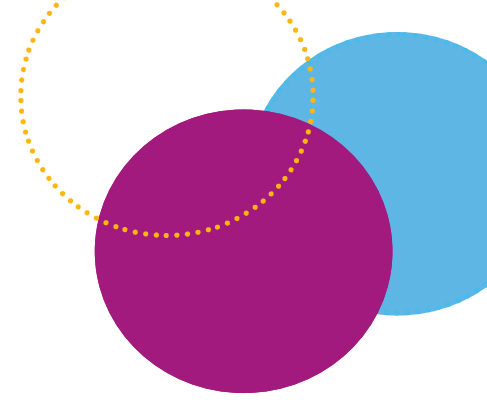
### Developing a volunteer role

It is a good idea to have clear volunteer role descriptions which set out what volunteers can expect to be doing and how you will support them to do it. Use the **Volunteer Role Template** to help you draft new role descriptions.

Role descriptions for volunteers can be more flexible than those for paid staff. You may also sometimes be able to respond to what volunteers can offer and create a role for them, but it is still a good idea to set out the tasks clearly, and explain the support you will offer.

Clear role descriptions are key to volunteer recruitment, but they also help you to manage volunteers too. They can help keep volunteers focused, motivated and can help you address problems because the expectations have been made clear at the start.

Volunteering opportunities that are vague or unclear about what's expected can lead to recruitment difficulties and a high turnover of volunteers. Recruitment is more likely to succeed if opportunities look interesting, welcoming and rewarding.



To get started, list all the tasks that volunteers could do within your organisation. You can then group these tasks in to roles, for example by grouping all the admin tasks or the customer-facing tasks.

The **Volunteer Role Template** has tips and hints to help you. Make sure you include:

- Benefits to the volunteer
- Information about your organisation
- Role title
- Tasks and responsibilities
- Location
- Hours
- Skills and attributes required
- Other information or restrictions

Try to express skills and attributes in a way that relates directly to the role. For example, if the role involves telling lots of people about your organisation's work, you might say 'able to speak confidently with a wide range of people' rather than 'bubbly and outgoing'.

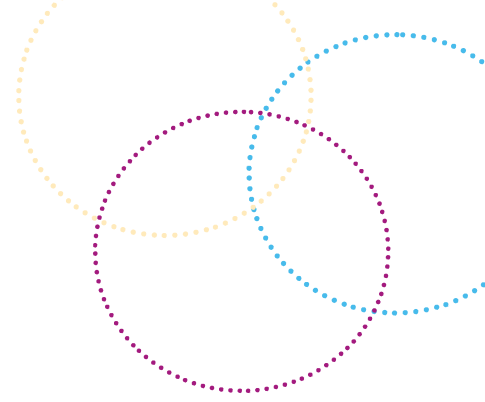
If there are other restrictions on what kinds of volunteers you will accept – such as age restrictions or a need for male or female volunteers then say so, but you need to be sure that they are essential to the role. If there are restrictions, you need to explain why. Restrictions should not be discriminatory or based on stereotypes about certain kinds of people.

## Manage risks

If the role is part of a new project or is something your organisation has not done before, make sure you consider the risks and build in reasonable measures to manage or deal with those risks. This could include risks to the volunteer, to clients or service users, or to the organisation as a whole. See **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'** for links to more information on how to assess and manage risks.

# 5

## Volunteer role template



<b>Role title</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	
<b>Tasks and responsibilities</b>	
<b>Skills, experience and attributes needed</b>	
<b>When and where</b>	
<b>Support offered</b>	
<b>What you could get out of it</b>	
<b>Other information</b>	
<b>What to do if you're interested</b>	

# 5

<b>Role title</b>	Say what it is - don't just put 'volunteer'. After-school group leader, sports coach, befriender, treasurer, driver, carer... Do you need to use the word 'volunteer' at all?
<b>Purpose</b>	Why this role/work is important – what difference does it make?
<b>Tasks and responsibilities</b>	Describe the main tasks/activities of the role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it involve working on their own, or as part of a team, or assisting someone else...?</li> <li>• What does it involve - eg travel, caring, manual work, organising, assisting, leading, teaching, customer service, computers, fundraising, arts, sports...? Indoors or outdoors?</li> <li>• What are the specific tasks?</li> <li>• If the role involves direct work with service-users/customers, give relevant information about their needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Skills, experience and attributes needed</b>	Be clear and realistic about the minimum level of skill/experience required to start this role, (eg a community transport driver might need a clean driving licence and good people skills).  Although it might be tempting to compile a long list of the qualities of your 'ideal' volunteer, try to focus on what's really important to get them started in the role. For example, asking that people have a commitment to your aims and objectives at this stage (when they barely know what you do) could be quite off-putting to someone who's only just heard of your organisation. Commitment will develop if volunteers are valued and treated with respect.  If the role is suitable for absolutely anyone, say so. Consider what support you could offer to help people develop once in the role.
<b>When and where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Times/days needed – what days, what time of day, how often, how much flexibility is there?</li> <li>• Where will the volunteer be based? Is this different from the main organisational address? Will they work from home?</li> </ul>
<b>Support offered</b>	Give information about expenses, induction and training, supervision/line management, insurance cover etc
<b>What you could get out of it</b>	What are the benefits of volunteering with your organisation? E.g. job satisfaction, a supportive environment, training, learning new skills, using existing skills, chance to get out in the fresh air, meet new people, be part of something worthwhile...
<b>Other information</b>	Do volunteers need to be able to commit to a certain level of training? Will they need a DBS check because this role is 'regulated activity'? Are there any restrictions on who can apply?
<b>What to do if you're interested</b>	Contact details of a named person – give more than one method of contact. Explain the application process – what will happen next?

# 6

## Recruiting volunteers

### How to find potential volunteers

Most volunteers are recruited by word of mouth - through friends, relatives or colleagues. This means that it is important that volunteers have a good experience with your organisation. Word of mouth is a powerful tool – volunteers who have a good experience with your organisation are great ambassadors, but similarly volunteers who have a poor experience will not be singing your praises!

However word of mouth is only one way, and the down side is that you tend to be less likely to recruit a really diverse pool of volunteers. This can mean that your organisation begins to stagnate, so to avoid that it is best to use a variety of methods of recruitment.

### Advertise through your local Volunteer Centre

Volunteer Centres have a database of local opportunities and publish bulletins regularly. It's free, and it reaches people of all ages who are interested in volunteering/community action. For contact details of your nearest Volunteer Centre, see **Sheet 18 'How can Volunteer Centres help'**.

### Do-it website

[www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org) is a searchable online portal for volunteering opportunities. Volunteer Centres can post your opportunities to Do-it if you wish, or you can create your own organisation's account.

### Advertise in the community

You could try using posters, leaflets, presentations or local papers and magazines to get the word out there. Or why not make a direct approach to organisations who already work with people you want to reach. For example make use of schools, colleges, local clubs/societies or employers to reach new people.

### Social media

By using social media such as Facebook or Twitter to connect with people interested in your cause, you can then invite them to help when you need volunteers.

### Your own website

Make sure your website has information about how people can support your organisation, and how they can find out more about volunteering with you.

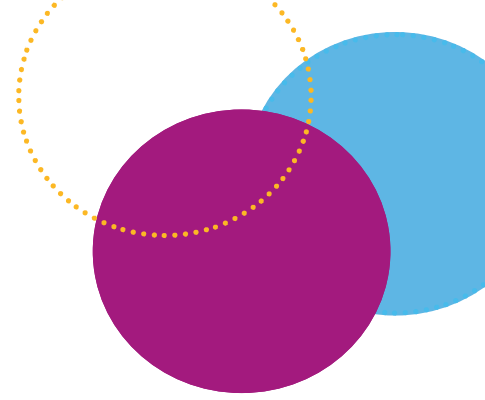
### Specialist brokers

There are a few specialist volunteer broker services that can link you up with people who have professional or technical skills. See **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'** for details.

### Are you ready to respond to enquiries?

There are thousands of things people could choose to do with their time, so treat any volunteer enquiry as a gift. Respond quickly and with enthusiasm. An unexplained delay or an unwelcoming response is likely to appear ungrateful and off-putting to volunteers.

The initial contact (whether it is by telephone or email) needs to be friendly, welcoming and keen. Whoever responds to enquiries needs to be well-informed, approachable, able to answer questions and tell the enquirer what will happen next.



It is unrealistic to expect every expression of interest to result in an actual volunteer. Be prepared to give people the chance to find out more about you before they make an informed choice. Recruitment is mutual - it is as much about the volunteer deciding if the role is right for them, as it is about you deciding if the volunteer is right for the role.

If there is a selection process (such as taking up references, Disclosure and Barring Service checks) then take time to explain what is involved, what information will be needed and why you need it. Most importantly, keep volunteers informed at every stage of the recruitment process to maintain their interest.

## Be positive

Enthusiasm and a good welcome can go a long way to creating a good first impression of your organisation. Bear in mind the key differences between recruiting volunteers and recruiting paid staff.

### Paid staff:

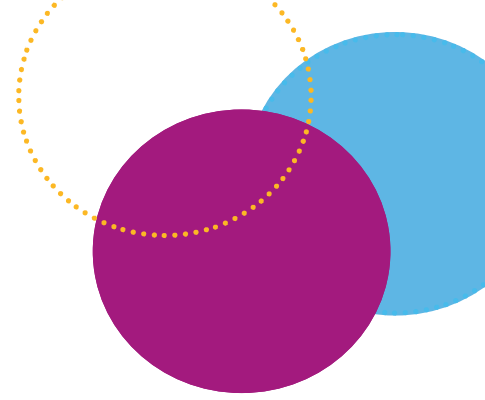
- **Competitive for applicants** involving the selection of one candidate over the others - and most people need a job
- In most cases the aim is to reject all but the successful candidate
- Often time-limited, with a fixed deadline for applications

### Volunteers:

- **Competitive for organisations** with many opportunities to apply for. Volunteers can be choosy and will select the organisation they like best – and they don't need to volunteer at all
- In most cases, organisations need to attract and retain as many suitable volunteers as possible, not just one
- Often an ongoing process where volunteers may apply at any time

# 7

## 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:

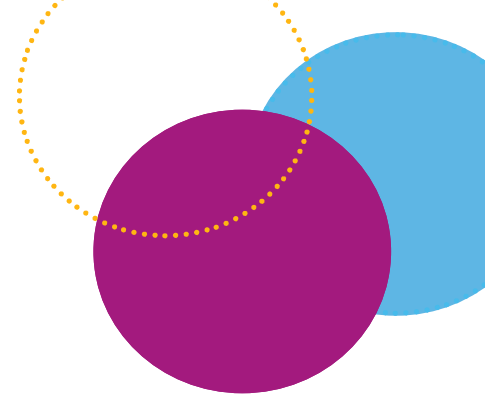
- The volunteer's name and contact details
- Details of an emergency contact
- Information about any health conditions or allergies which their supervisor or colleagues might need to know about to keep them safe whilst volunteering

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.



# 8

## Interviews and references

How formal your interview is depends on your organisation. If the role is demanding and involves significant responsibility, you may want a more formal process. If the role is more casual you may want to keep it informal and call the interview a 'visit' or 'chat'.

Either way, before the interview, you should let the volunteer know what to expect and allay any fears they might have.

### Interviewing volunteers

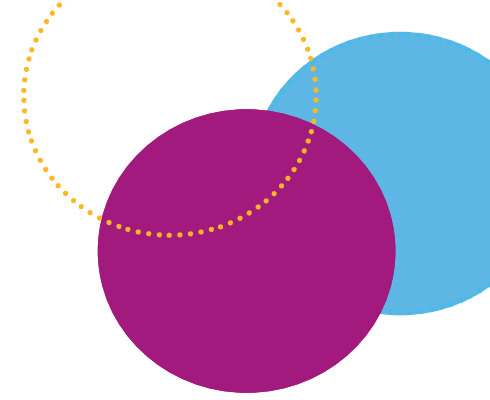
Interviewing potential volunteers should:

- Provide the chance to explain about the work of your organisation and how volunteers fit in
- Give you the opportunity to assess the suitability of volunteers and enable you to make sure they have the skills and qualities that you need, or to match their skills most effectively to a suitable role
- Give volunteers a chance to find out more, to help them decide whether your organisation is the right one for them
- Help to ensure that all volunteers are treated consistently, and given the same opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the role

It is useful to find out why the individual wants to volunteer and what motivates them. This helps to ensure there's a good match between volunteer and role. You also have the chance to explain more about your induction and any training you offer.

### Planning an interview

- Make sure that other colleagues know that a potential volunteer is coming and ensure that someone is available to welcome them.
- Have any background information to hand as the volunteer may ask you questions.
- Draw up a list of questions in advance based on the volunteer role description. Using the same questions for a particular role creates fairness, but feel free to ask volunteers to expand on their answers. Remember the interview is your main selection tool.
- Use open questions, such as 'What experience do you have...?', 'What is important about...?', 'How did you...?'. As an interviewer you should be doing more listening than talking.
- If you are interviewing several people, you may need to take notes. It is less intimidating if you explain to the volunteer why you are making notes, just in case they think they have said something wrong.
- If you are not going to make a decision during the interview, then tell the volunteer when you will let them know the result. The interview may also give the volunteer an opportunity to 'self-select', i.e. to reject the role if they feel it is not right for them.



## References

Some form of independent verification is good practice for most regular roles. Some organisations ask for references in writing; others prefer telephone references. For reasons of practicality and consistency it is sensible to have a standard list of questions to ask. If taking up telephone references, keep a written record of points raised, the name of the referee and the date.

The questions asked should verify in what capacity the person has known the volunteer, and for how long, and could ask specific questions which relate to the role description and skills for the role the volunteer will be performing. You might also want to ask whether the referee would have any concerns or doubts about offering the person this role. When asked specific questions, it is much harder for a referee to conceal any doubts or concerns than it would be in a bland, general 'character reference'.

Beware of general written references produced by a prospective volunteer. They may have been supplied as a way of encouraging the person's exit from their previous role/post, and are also open to forgery.

You will need some guidelines on who you will accept as a referee, and how long they must have known the person. Some volunteers, especially if they have been ill or out of paid work for a while or if they have recently come to the UK, may find it difficult to suggest a referee, particularly if they assume you expect an employment reference. You might have to suggest alternatives such as a teacher, tutor, social worker, health professional, volunteer manager or neighbour.

# 9

## Safeguarding and criminal record checks

### Safeguarding children and adults

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare includes:

- Protecting them from maltreatment or things that are bad for their health or development
- Making sure they grow up in circumstances that allow safe and effective care
- Enabling them to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully

Safeguarding adults includes:

- Protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- Stopping abuse or neglect wherever possible, addressing the causes and reducing the risk
- Making sure people's wellbeing is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account.
- Supporting them in making choices and having control about how they want to live

Important elements of safeguarding include having clear expectations and guidance on appropriate behaviour, boundaries, supervision and ways of working, plus workable procedures for anyone involved with the organisation to be able to raise concerns and be listened to.

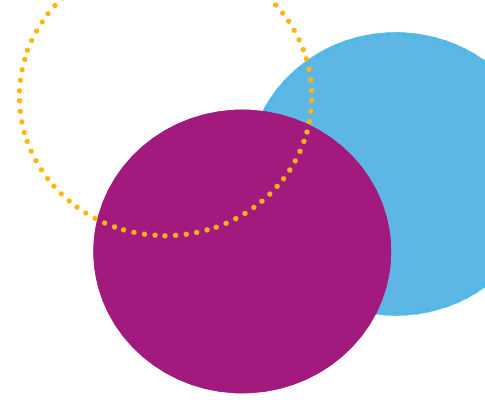
It also means having careful recruitment processes in place for roles that involve direct work with children, young people, and adults who have care and support needs. References, interviewing and attitude/aptitude checking are important elements of that process. Some volunteer roles may be classed as 'regulated activity' in which case you must undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at the appropriate level.

For more information on safer recruitment and management for voluntary and community organisations working with children, young people or adults see the links in the 'Safeguarding' section on **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'** or contact your local Volunteer Centre for guidance.

### Criminal records

There are over 11 million people in the UK with a criminal record, so it is important not to discriminate by rejecting people from volunteering just because they have a record. Your recruitment shouldn't exclude applications from volunteers who may have committed minor or irrelevant offences, or whose offences were many years ago.

Volunteering can also be important in helping people with convictions overcome past difficulties and move forward in a positive way.



## Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks

Convictions which are considered 'spent' do not normally need to be disclosed by an applicant, but for some types of work, particularly that which involves working with children or vulnerable adults, there is legislation that allows organisations to ask about an employee or volunteer's full criminal record history including spent convictions.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) offers different levels of check for these roles depending on the nature of the work:

- Standard
- Enhanced
- Enhanced with a barred list check

There is also a Basic check which only shows unspent conviction information. Roles that are 'regulated activity', are eligible for the highest level of check, which includes a check against the lists of people barred from working with children/vulnerable adults.

Before you consider asking a person to apply for a Standard or Enhanced DBS check, you are responsible for ensuring that you are entitled to ask that person to reveal their conviction history, and for assessing which level of check the role is eligible for. See the online eligibility checker at:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>

It is good practice to make it clear that a criminal record is not necessarily a barrier to becoming a volunteer, and to provide a confidential route for potential volunteers to tell you about their convictions before having to complete a DBS form.

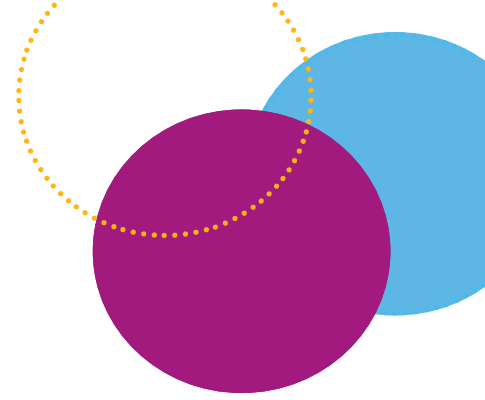
If convictions are revealed, doing a risk assessment will help you decide an appropriate course of action, taking into account factors such as the nature of the offence, how long ago it was, the applicant's behaviour and experience, the nature of the role etc. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to welcome a volunteer with a criminal record is at your discretion.

DBS checks alone do not ensure the safety of your customers/clients – they are designed to discourage or identify people who pose a known risk. They need to be seen as part of an overall approach to safeguarding and managing risk.

## DBS Update service

People applying for a DBS check can now subscribe to the DBS Update service which reduces the need for repeated checks by future employers/volunteer-involving organisations. Volunteers can subscribe for free but they must do so within a month and will need either their application reference number or DBS certificate number: <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

# Induction and training



In order to carry out their role effectively, all volunteers will require some level of training. Your local Volunteer Centre or CVS can help you find training on offer locally, and may offer some training free of charge.

You might want to distinguish between the training which is *obligatory* and other learning opportunities which may be *optional*.

Obligatory induction or training will cover the things that volunteers really need to know (for example, the aims and activities of the organisation, what their role involves, the policies and practices they will be expected to abide by).

Optional training should offer the chance for volunteers to learn more or develop their role if they want to, or perhaps gain some accreditation for the work they do.

## Induction

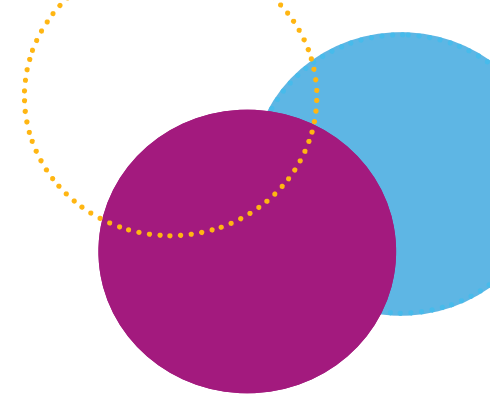
All new volunteers will need an induction or orientation into your organisation - it gives you the ability to explain how, why and where you operate, where they fit in, and what will be expected of them. It could take anything from half an hour to several days depending on the nature of the role and the level of responsibility involved.

Induction is an important part of your welcome for new volunteers and should include elements such as:

- Introducing the aims, activities, ethos and plans of the organisation
- Introducing other team members, clients/service users and managers
- Arrangements for breaks/refreshments
- Introduction to facilities, premises, equipment, communication and other aspects of the working environment
- Emergency procedures and key contacts
- Procedures and policies relevant to the volunteer's role
- What you expect from volunteers (eg appropriate behaviour, boundaries to their role...)
- What volunteers can expect from you (eg support, line management, reimbursement of expenses, further training opportunities...)

## Protecting volunteers and users/clients

It is important to have sensible, workable procedures to ensure that your organisation protects its clients. If you are working with people, especially those who might be considered vulnerable, you should have appropriate systems and procedures in place and be able to introduce new volunteers to these systems during induction and initial training.



You may need to include the following:

- Policies and clear guidance on safeguarding the welfare of clients, access to money and property and other matters where abuse, fraud or breach of trust may occur. The work of the organisation should be planned in a way that minimises risks.
- All clients or service users should be clear about how to complain to an independent person if they are unhappy about the actions of a worker or volunteer. If clients are unable to make their own complaints, additional safeguards may be needed to monitor workers and volunteers.
- Agreed procedures for protecting people, property and the reputation of the organisation should be applied to all; and all workers/volunteers should understand what their work involves and the limits of their activities.

## Training

To assess what other training volunteers might need requires answers to 4 questions:

- What knowledge, skills and attitudes/approaches does a person need to carry out this role?
- What knowledge, skills and attitudes/approaches does each volunteer already have?
- Are there any gaps or areas for development?
- Will training address these?

Training does not have to be formal or expensive. You can provide the information and training that volunteers need in a variety of ways:

### **Informal face to face**

One to one induction, coaching, supervision or support sessions, team meetings, peer support such as buddying up with an experienced volunteer or staff member or social events.

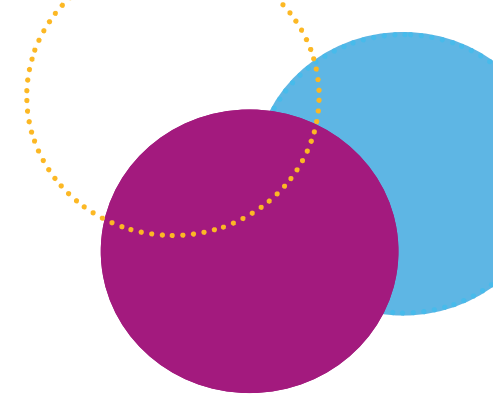
### **Written information**

Guidelines, information pack, policy documents, volunteer handbook, websites or internal IT networks.

### **Formal/structured training**

Courses, workshops, talks and lectures or distance learning packs.

Bear in mind that some volunteers may have had poor experiences with training and education in the past, whether at school or in the workplace. Sometimes people think of 'training' as something you get told to do if you're bad at your job – and this kind of negative workplace culture can be hard to break. You might need to deal in advance with any fears or preconceptions that volunteers might have about attending training courses or workshops.



# Support and supervision

Good support and supervision is about finding an effective balance between the needs of the volunteer and the needs of the organisation. Because volunteers are not paid, maintaining enthusiasm and motivation is critical to successful management.

Particularly for roles which require a regular commitment, the organisation needs to make sure volunteers' energy and enthusiasm is harnessed effectively to benefit the organisation on an ongoing basis.

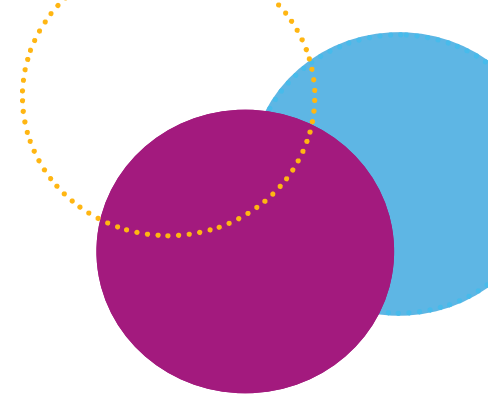
If your organisation involves volunteers on a regular basis, you may want to draw up a simple framework such as a volunteer policy, a charter or something which sets out the principles upon which your organisation involves and supports volunteers. This does not have to be a long or complicated document, and it can help to ensure that volunteers are treated consistently and fairly. For more guidance on creating a framework or policy suitable for your organisation, contact your nearest Volunteer Centre. Contact details are in **Sheet 18 'How can Volunteer Centres help?'**

## **SUPPORT** is largely about encouragement and reassurance to the person:

- To focus on the volunteer as a person
- To listen, and create an environment where a volunteer is able to express him/herself
- To reassure where necessary
- To make sure the volunteer feels that their work is valued
- To be alert to possible changes or personal issues affecting the volunteer
- To give (and receive) feedback, both positive and negative – support does not exclude constructive criticism
- To pick up on any concerns or problems the volunteer has with their work and deal with them before they become more serious
- To assess training needs and facilitate personal development

## **SUPERVISION** is largely concerned with the tasks being done by the volunteer and encouraging the person to be most effective in their volunteering role:

- To evaluate progress, set objectives and agree future action plans
- To give guidance in work based tasks
- To address any problems early and deal with them in a constructive way
- To make sure the organisation is accountable for the work being done
- To provide a forum for discussion, clarifying priorities, enabling decision making and agreeing on change



The balance between support and supervision, the level of supervision, and how closely you manage any particular volunteer, will depend on many factors, such as:

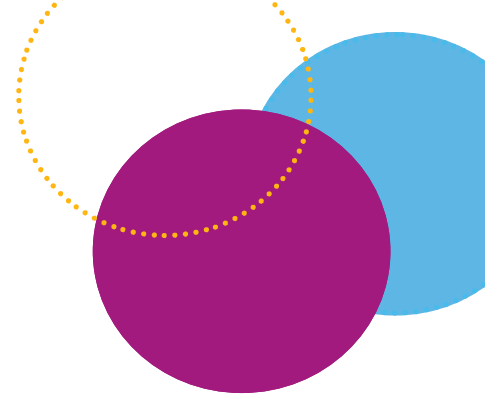
- How experienced the volunteer is and how long they have been with you;
- The role of the volunteer and the level of responsibility they have;
- The potential for things to go wrong (and how serious the problems could be);
- Whether they are doing work that needs to be monitored or which has to meet organisational targets;
- The personal circumstances of the volunteer;
- How often you are in contact with the volunteer and whether this contact is in person or by telephone, e-mail or post;
- What type of work they do and where (on-site, at a distance or in the community);
- How a volunteer currently feels about their role, the organisation, other volunteers and staff, and whether there are any issues of concern;
- The methods you use to supervise staff.

It may vary from person to person (some volunteers will come with more confidence or experience than others and some may need more encouragement or reassurance) and may change over time, e.g. as volunteers become more experienced, take on new roles, or if their personal circumstances change.

For low cost ideas to show your appreciation for volunteers see **Sheet 13 ‘Keeping volunteers’**, and for more advice or training on supervising, managing and retaining volunteers contact your nearest Volunteer Centre—contact details are in **Sheet 18 ‘How can Volunteer Centres help?’**



## Volunteer expenses



One practical way of making sure that volunteers feel supported and valued is to make sure that they are not left out of pocket.

Not every volunteer will want or need to claim expenses, but for people who are on a fixed or low income such as benefits, a state pension or a student loan, the cost of volunteering can be a very real barrier.

Even costs such as a return bus fare can turn a kind offer to volunteer into a rather expensive hobby. Including volunteers expenses in your forward plans, budgeting and funding bids will help you to attract a wider range of volunteers who can give you the time you are looking for.

Do bear in mind that many people who have plenty of time to give may be on a fairly limited income such as young people (eg students), retired people, parents of young families, jobseekers or those working part time. By not offering to reimburse expenses, you may seriously limit your chances of finding volunteers who can help on a regular basis.

### Expenses which organisations may reimburse to volunteers include:

- Travel expenses from home to and from the place of volunteering
- Travel expenses in the course of volunteering. (Either a mileage rate for volunteers who use their own car, or the actual cost of bus, rail or taxi fares)
- Meals or refreshments provided by you, or reimbursement of the actual cost of meals or refreshments taken while volunteering
- The cost of specialist clothing, materials etc. required to volunteer
- Childcare costs, or the care of adult dependants, while the carer is volunteering

Volunteers should only be reimbursed the actual cost of their expenses, with documentary evidence to back this up (e.g. a receipt, bus ticket or mileage record).

You need to be aware that if you offer a 'flat rate' payment (however small the amount), or if you pay volunteers more than the actual cost (e.g. if you 'round up' the amount you give them), or if you explicitly offer volunteers perks with a monetary value in exchange for a certain number of hours work, you may inadvertently be creating a contract of employment. This could result in problems for both the organisation and the volunteer, particularly for volunteers claiming benefits. Contact your local Volunteer Centre for guidance if you think you might be doing this.

**Tip:** Include a proportion of volunteer support costs, such as expenses and training, in every funding bid.

## Keeping volunteers

Showing volunteers that they are valued and appreciated is critical to developing a team of happy and productive people, who are working for you not against you.

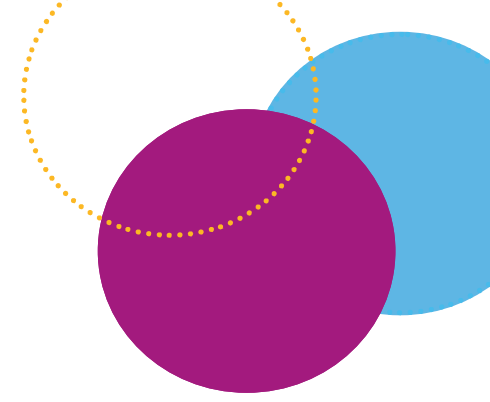
### Volunteers are more likely to stay if they:

- Feel appreciated and recognised by the organisation
- Are used effectively and can see that their work is needed
- Feel that they are doing something worthwhile and that they do make a difference
- Know there is the flexibility for them to be able to change or develop their role or commitment if they want to
- Are provided with an opportunity for learning, skills development and personal growth
- Feel confident that they can handle the tasks they are asked to do
- Are adequately supported and supervised
- Have a sense of belonging and being part of a team, and have opportunities to socialise with others
- Are consulted about their work and have the opportunity to contribute to policy and decision making if they want to
- Are welcomed, accepted and supported by other volunteers and paid staff feel that their personal needs and motivations are being met

### Volunteers are likely to leave if they:

- Feel unappreciated or taken for granted
- Have too many demands made on them or on their time
- Are asked to do things they don't feel equipped to cope with
- Are given too much involvement and responsibility – or too little
- Have unrealistic or unclear expectations of their role
- End up out of pocket
- Don't enjoy what they do or feel that it's not valuable
- Feel that their time is being wasted or their work badly organised
- Feel isolated, unwelcome or treated differently to others

There are plenty of simple things you can do to help people feel appreciated and part of the team. See overleaf for some ideas...



### **No cost, or low cost ideas for showing volunteers they are valued:**

- Know volunteers by name and take an interest
- Be approachable
- Hold social gatherings or team meetings where volunteers can meet each other
- Chat over a cuppa
- Offer training opportunities where possible
- Give praise
- Say thank you
- Give a reference
- Enable volunteers to pass on their skills/experience to others
- Nominate for awards (or present your own)
- Feature volunteers in publicity, annual reports etc
- Make sure volunteers get to understand the impact of their work
- Ask for their opinions and involve them in decisions that affect their work
- Encourage ideas and suggestions
- Smile!
- Respond quickly to enquiries
- Act on feedback received from volunteers
- Celebrate successes and achievements
- Make use of Volunteers Week or similar external events

### **If you have a small budget:**

- Birthday/Christmas cards
- Certificates
- Volunteer newsletter
- T-shirts or other branded items
- Away day, party or celebration event , biscuits, cake...

## One-off events

One-off events can be a great opportunity to involve new volunteers, particularly people who may not have the time to give more regularly, or people who may not have volunteered before.

This section is a short overview of some key elements of event planning, but is not a comprehensive guide. Further resources and sources of information are listed in **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'**.

The key to successful events is planning ahead. You could use **Sheet 15 'Event planning checklist'** to help you. It has some prompt questions to get you thinking about the different aspects of putting on an event.

### Venue, equipment, facilities and refreshments

Choose your venue with care. Consider how many people your venue can accommodate— too big is just as off-putting as too small. Do you need to be near public transport and is there parking available? What facilities are there for people with disabilities?

Other things to consider include the times available for setting up/clearing away and the transport and storage of equipment, displays and publicity material etc.

Make a list of what you will need on the day. Where might you be able to borrow things from? Can local businesses help with donations or other in-kind support?

Think what you will do about refreshments and/or meals if it's a long event. You can find information about serving food at your event on [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

### Permissions and licensing

Certain types of entertainment, or events involving alcohol sales are covered by the Licensing Act 2003. Some premises will already have appropriate licences but if not, you may need to complete a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). Check with your local authority for further guidance and TEN forms.

If you are involving young people under 16 you may need to get parental permission.

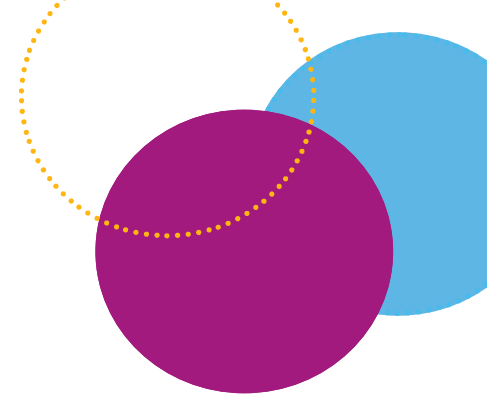
### Communications and publicity

Does your event tie in with a campaign, a themed week or day (such as Volunteers' Week or Make a Difference Day), or the launch of a new project or resource? This can be useful in helping to get publicity.

Your local CVS or Volunteer Centre may be able to help with templates for press releases if you want to get your event featured in the local media. Some offer marketing or PR advice/training too.

If you write a press release, remember the five 'W's:

- Who - is the story about?
- What - is the most important angle?
- Why - is it important?
- Where - is it happening?
- When - did it happen/will it happen?



## Recruiting and managing event volunteers

Talk to as many people as possible about your event – word of mouth is a great recruitment tool.

Contact other local organisations, clubs, societies and employers in your community to ask for help. Some larger employers may support their staff to volunteer as part of their ‘corporate social responsibility’ programmes. You may want to try and get a feature in the local press, make use of your own or other organisation’s newsletters and websites, or use online social networking sites to generate interest.

Register the volunteering opportunities with your local Volunteer Centre. Allow plenty of time for promotion before your event.

Tips for managing event volunteers:

- Involve key volunteers in planning wherever possible
- Keep records and contact details of all the people who express interest in helping at your event.
- Keep volunteers informed of progress
- Make sure volunteers know where to be on the day, and when
- Set out clear roles
- Brief volunteers on the day of the event – their tasks, timings of the event, who to contact in case of problems, emergency procedures, who they’ll be working with etc.
- Have a system for communicating with all your helpers on the day.
- Ask for feedback from everyone at the end of the event, while things are still fresh in people’s minds – how did it go from their point of view, did they experience any problems, what would they improve for next time?

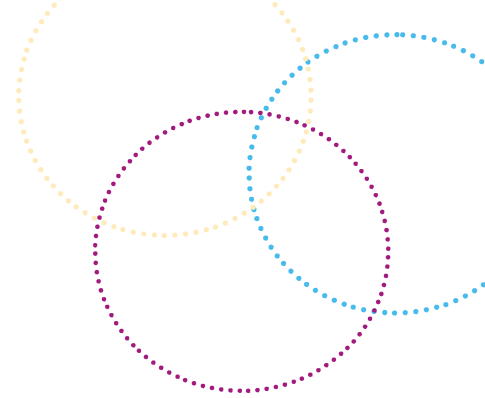
## Safety and insurance

Assess the potential risks and put sensible plans in place to minimise the chances of things going wrong – see **Sheet 20 for an example Risk Assessment..**

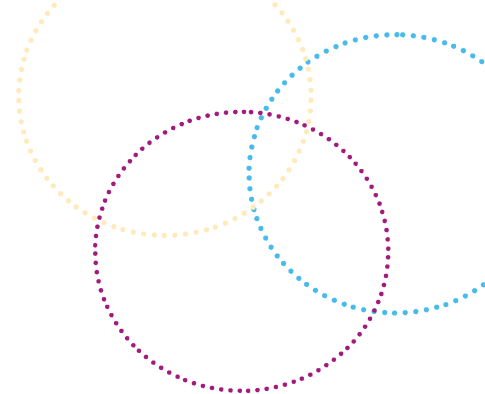
Risk assessment does not have to be long and complicated. It’s not about having the paperwork in place, it’s about identifying real and practical **actions** – things you can and should do to minimise the risk of harm.

If the event is open to the public, check that you have public liability insurance cover. The venue you are using may have appropriate cover already, or you may need to arrange your own. You may be able to get support with this by working in partnership with other organisations such as the local council.

## Event planning checklist



<p><b>Why are we doing it?</b></p> <p>What are the core aims for the event? What must be achieved by doing it? For example is it to raise money, inspire people, raise awareness, celebrate something...?</p>
<p><b>What will we do?</b></p> <p>What activities will it involve? What risks do we need to think about? What permissions, licences or insurance do we need? What equipment will we need? Write a list of the tasks that need to be done to make it all happen.</p>
<p><b>Who will be involved?</b></p> <p>Who is the event for? Who else will need to be there? Think about all the different groups of people who have an interest in the success of your event; eg, service-users, family members, local residents, special guests, volunteers, managers, funders etc. Do we need to recruit extra volunteers to help? Are there partner organisations or local businesses that can help?</p>
<p><b>When will we hold the event?</b></p> <p>Does it clash with anything else? Is it the right time of year for this sort of activity? It is the right time of day for the people we want to reach? Can we get volunteers to help at that time?</p>
<p><b>Where will we run it?</b></p> <p>Outdoors or indoors? Can people get there? Is the venue accessible and does it have the right facilities for everyone? What are the alternatives or contingency plans, for example in case of bad weather for an outdoor event?</p>
<p><b>How much will it cost?</b></p> <p>Set out a budget. Research costs for venues, refreshments, equipment, publicity, volunteer expenses, licences, insurance etc. How will the costs be met – can you get sponsorship? Do you need to raise funds on the day? If so, how?</p>
<p><b>How will we tell people what's going on?</b></p> <p>Think about how you will promote the event to people who might want to come, both before the event, and on the day. How will you communicate with your team on the day? Will you do any publicity afterwards?</p>
<p><b>How will we know if the event was a success?</b></p> <p>Go back to the aims – are they measurable? Get feedback during and after the event, de-brief everyone involved, including your volunteer helpers. Make notes for next time. Make sure you thank anyone who helped out on the day.</p>



# Event planning checklist

Use this page to help with your event planning.

<b>Why are we doing it?</b>
<b>What will we do?</b>
<b>Who will be involved?</b>
<b>When will we hold the event?</b>
<b>Where will we run it?</b>
<b>How much will it cost?</b>
<b>How will we tell people what's going on?</b>
<b>How will we know if the event was a success?</b>

## Dealing with problems

If volunteers know what is expected of them, and are properly trained and supervised, it is less likely that things will go wrong. Good management also helps to ensure that any problems that do arise are dealt with quickly and effectively.

However it is a good idea to consider:

- What a volunteer should do if they have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer
- What you will do if you are unhappy with the behaviour of a volunteer

### Complaints made by volunteers

Volunteers need to know who they go to if they have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer, and to be confident that their complaint will be taken seriously and handled sensitively.

#### Making a complaint – an example of a procedure

\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation) is concerned about the welfare of its volunteers and takes any complaints seriously. If you have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer, the following procedure should be used to make the organisation aware of the problem.

**Stage 1:** You should first of all raise the matter with your supervisor.

**Stage 2:** If this does not improve matters, or if the complaint is against your supervisor, you should request a meeting with \_\_\_\_ (a senior manager or trustee) and put your complaint to them. The person you are complaining about will have the opportunity to respond, and to take steps to improve the situation if necessary.

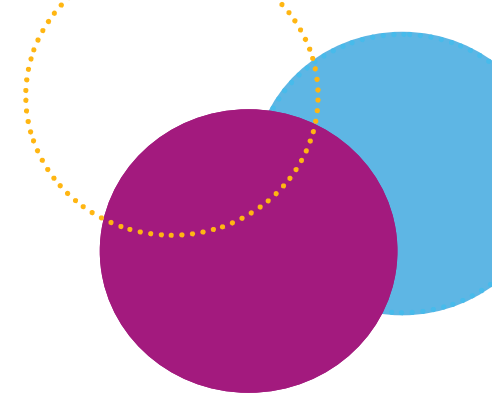
**Stage 3:** If after \_\_\_\_ days there is still reason for complaint, then you should put the complaint in writing to \_\_\_\_ (a senior person such as the chief executive or chair of the trustees). They will investigate the problem and let you know the outcome, and any further steps that will be taken, in writing within \_\_\_\_ days of receiving your complaint.

### Problems with the behaviour of a volunteer

It is good practice to have a clear and transparent procedure for making sure that if there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour, it is handled fairly. You will need to make sure volunteers are aware of this and have access to a written copy of the procedure.

The first step is always to try to resolve the issue informally, by talking to the volunteer. They may be unaware that there is a problem, or they may be unsuited to the role in some way. Further training or a change of role may resolve the problem. If not, then having a clear process for dealing with these situations fairly and consistently is important. A sample procedure for dealing with this is overleaf.





### An example of a procedure for dealing with problems involving volunteers

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of the organisation) is committed to treating volunteers fairly and to making sure that any problems are dealt with in a fair and transparent way, giving volunteers the opportunity to put their case.

If a complaint is made, or there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour, the following procedure will take place.

**Stage 1:** In the first instance, the volunteer's immediate supervisor will discuss the matter informally with the volunteer to try and resolve the problem.

**Stage 2:** If this does not solve the problem, the volunteer's supervisor will arrange a formal meeting with the volunteer to discuss the problem, giving the volunteer the chance to respond. An informal warning may be made and steps agreed to change the volunteer's behaviour.

**Stage 3:** If there are further grounds for complaint, a formal meeting will be arranged between the volunteer, volunteer supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_ (a senior person within the organisation, for example the manager or a trustee). A formal warning may be issued, and the volunteer made aware that if the volunteer repeats the behaviour they will be asked to leave.

**Stage 4:** If the offending behaviour is repeated, the volunteer will be asked to leave.

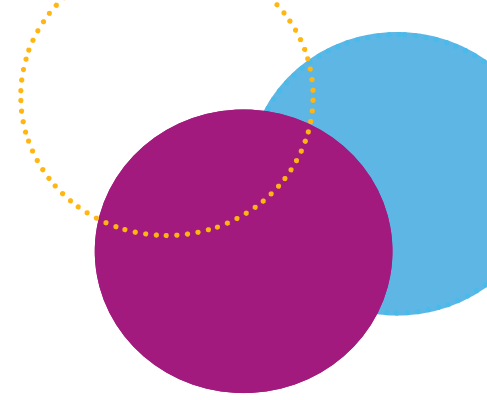
In the case of serious misconduct (for example violence or theft) the volunteer may be suspended immediately while an investigation takes place. The investigation will be carried out by the volunteer's supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_ (a senior person in the organisation). A decision will be made within \_\_\_ days and the volunteer informed of the decision (state how they will be informed). If the complaint is upheld, the volunteer will be asked to leave.

Volunteers will have the right:

- To be accompanied at meetings at any stage by a friend, volunteer or staff member of their choice.
- To appeal against any decision made.

The appeal should be made in writing to \_\_\_\_\_ (a senior person such as the chief executive or chair) and the volunteer will have the opportunity to put their case in person to them. A decision will be made within \_\_\_ days, and this decision will be final.

## 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?

# How can Volunteer Centres help?

Volunteer Centres provide support at a local level for volunteer involving organisations:

- Helping you find new volunteers
- Giving you advice and support on how to involve volunteers and develop your volunteering programme.

In Lincolnshire all Volunteer Centres are part of the local voluntary / community sector development agency for each district, sometimes known as a CVS (Community and Voluntary Service). Contact details for all Centres are overleaf.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) acts as an umbrella body for England's Volunteer Centres, but they are all independent not for profit organisations and are funded in different ways. This sometimes means they work in slightly different ways, but all Volunteer Centres are expected to deliver the following services:

## **Brokerage – matching people with volunteering opportunities**

Volunteer involving organisations can register their opportunities for free with the Volunteer Centre, which then promotes the opportunities to people online, face to face, at events etc. The Volunteer Centre offers potential volunteers advice and information on finding opportunities that match their interests, aims and availability.

## **Marketing Volunteering**

Volunteer Centres get involved in promoting and marketing volunteering through local, regional and national events and campaigns.

## **Good Practice Development**

Volunteer Centres promote good practice in working with volunteers to all volunteer involving organisations, including offering training, advice and resources for people who manage and support volunteers.

## **Developing Volunteering Opportunities**

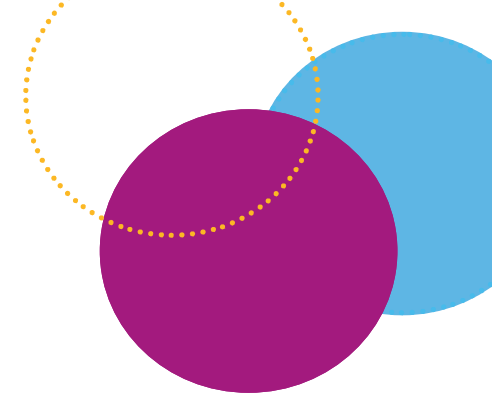
Volunteer Centres help voluntary and community organisations, public sector agencies, social enterprises, local clubs and other groups to develop imaginative and varied volunteering opportunities that meet the organisation's needs whilst at the same time appealing to a diverse range of potential volunteers.

## **Policy Response and Campaigning**

Volunteer Centres may identify proposals or legislation that could impact on volunteering and participate in campaigning on issues that affect volunteers or volunteering.

## **Strategic Development of Volunteering**

Volunteer Centres work to inform strategic thinking and planning at local, sub-regional, regional and national level.



## Contact your nearest Volunteer Centre

### **Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service:**

[www.lincolnshirecvs.org.uk](http://www.lincolnshirecvs.org.uk)

#### **Boston, South Kesteven, South Holland, East Lindsey**

Tel 01205 510888

Email: [enquiry@lincolnshirecvs.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@lincolnshirecvs.org.uk)

### **Voluntary Centre Services:**

[www.voluntarycentreservices.org.uk](http://www.voluntarycentreservices.org.uk)

#### **North Kesteven**

The Old Mart, Church Street, Sleaford NG34 7DF

Tel 01529 308450

Email [northkesteven@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk](mailto:northkesteven@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk)

#### **Lincoln**

c/o City Hall, Beaumont Fee, Lincoln LN1 1DF

Email [lincoln@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk](mailto:lincoln@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk)

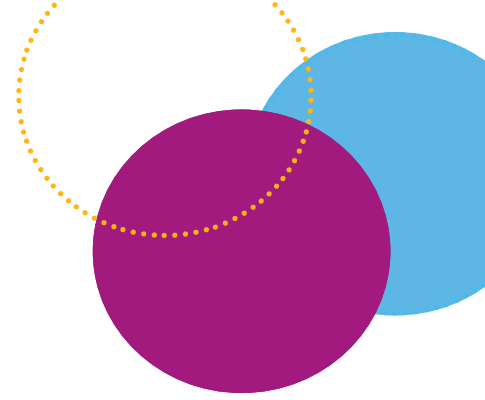
#### **West Lindsey**

c/o Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough DN21 2NA

Tel 01427 613470

Email [westlindsey@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk](mailto:westlindsey@voluntarycentreservices.org.uk)

# Volunteer Centres - frequently asked questions



## What's the difference between a Volunteer Centre and a CVS?

Support for voluntary and community sector organisations is generally split into two areas. Volunteer Centres (VC) work with organisations on all aspects of volunteer recruitment and management. Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) or other local support and development organisations work with 'voluntary and community sector' groups on organisational development, fundraising and business planning. They will also work with their local council to ensure that the voluntary/community sector has a voice. In Lincolnshire, the CVS and VC services are merged – so in each area there is one organisation delivering both services for that area.

## What's the difference between a Volunteer Bureau and a Volunteer Centre?

When VCs first started they were usually called Volunteer Bureaux, but some time ago the entire English network was rebranded as 'Volunteer Centres'. Sometimes you might also hear Volunteer Centres referred to as 'Volunteer Development Agencies' or 'VDAs'. This was a catch-all term when VCs were called different things, but is still often used in government publications and consultations.

## Should our organisation register with more than one Volunteer Centre?

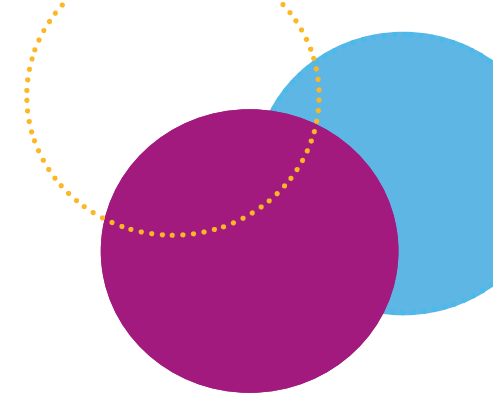
The most important Centre to register with is your local one, as they will be able to offer you support at a local level. Any opportunities registered locally can also appear on the Do-It website ([www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org)) so can potentially be seen by anyone searching the site. If you want to target recruitment across a wider area than just the district you are based in, talk to your local VC and ask them to share your opportunity information with other VCs. This will save you having to fill in the same forms for different VCs.

Lincolnshire CVS and Voluntary Centre Services have formed a partnership to deliver a new single point of access volunteering information website for Lincolnshire to cover all 7 accredited volunteer centres, across the 7 district in Lincolnshire: [lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk](http://lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk) ,

The new website will host a live, searchable volunteering opportunities database, self help tools for community groups, advice and support for volunteers and most importantly, contact information for the real people who deliver services in our local communities. Visitors to the site will also be able to find training sessions and local events, read the latest news from the Voluntary Sector and promote third sector job vacancies, for a small fee.

## Why does my Volunteer Centre keep bugging me about whether our details are up to date?

Organisations may forget to inform their VC if their details change, or if they no longer need volunteers in a certain role. This means that the information VCs hold on their databases may become out of date, that people are given details of vacancies which are no longer available, or are given the wrong contact details. This can be frustrating to potential volunteers, so VCs do everything they can to try and ensure their database is up to date. This is why you will regularly (usually once a year) get asked to confirm if the details they hold about you are correct.



### **Why does my Volunteer Centre keep sending volunteers who aren't right for us? Do I have to take all the volunteers that they send me?**

It is not part of a VC's role to assess whether potential volunteers are appropriate for an organisation, and they do not replace an organisation's normal application and selection processes. The VC will guide people to help them find opportunities that match their skills and motivation, but it is down to the individual to decide which opportunities they want to apply for, and down to your organisation to decide whether someone is suitable for your roles. If you clearly describe what you want the volunteer to do and mention any skills they would need to have when you register your opportunities, then it is easier for the VC to give people guidance about whether the role is right for them.

Most organisations will need to have some sort of selection procedure in place because not everyone who enquires about your roles will be suitable. The VC will not mind you turning down some of the people they have referred to you if they are genuinely not right for your role, but it is helpful if you give the volunteer honest feedback about why they are being turned down and refer them back to the VC for alternative roles. Your VC can help you develop a selection procedure that works for you.

### **We are not really part of the voluntary sector; will the Volunteer Centre understand our needs?**

Volunteer Centres work with all kinds of volunteer involving organisations. As well as organisations in the voluntary sector, they work with the public sector, with environmental and heritage organisations, arts groups, sports clubs and cultural or faith groups. They understand that different organisations work in different ways and have different priorities, risks and aims. The basic principles of volunteer management good practice remain the same and VCs are used to working with diverse organisations to look at how the principles could be applied in their setting.

### **Why has my Volunteer Centre never sent me any volunteers?**

Volunteer Centres cannot guarantee to find volunteers for every organisation. There are so many volunteer roles that people can pick and choose what they are interested in - some roles/organisations are just more popular than others. If you never receive any referrals from your VC it is worth checking whether there is something about the way you have listed your role that is putting people off. You may not have given enough details for people to get a good flavour of your opportunity, or have asked for specialised knowledge that not many people have, or have asked people for a long commitment, or people may be put off if you are unable to reimburse travel expenses, for example. Your VC can help you identify if there is more you can do to make your vacancy more appealing.