



# FACTSHEET 13

## Managing Volunteers

This factsheet is one of 2 in this series on working with volunteers and should be read in conjunction with **Factsheet 12: Volunteer Policies**

Volunteers can bring enormous benefits to an organisation as they not only provide practical support to assist yourself or your service users, but they also bring new ideas, initiatives and skills which can benefit your organisation greatly.

This factsheet covers volunteer management, a topic often overlooked by many organisations once they have managed to involve some volunteers in their work. If care and attention isn't devoted to the volunteers and their work then they can become demotivated and the experience of volunteering can become a negative one for all involved. In order to avoid this it is important that volunteers are valued and managed properly by the organisation they are working with.

Most aspects of volunteer management are law like health & safety, equal opportunities, training etc however, before enlisting the support of volunteers it is important to spend time thinking carefully about how and why you are going to involve volunteers in your organisation, and what support you will be able to give them. It is difficult enough to recruit volunteers without losing them after a few weeks, therefore the purpose behind this factsheet is to offer you general guidelines around the involvement and management of volunteers

Below are some tips and ideas about how to effectively manage your organisation's volunteers.

The ideas are broken down into 6 sections:

- Recruitment
- Selection & Screening

- Induction
- Training
- Support and Supervision
- Retaining Volunteers

### 1: Recruitment

Volunteers may be recruited because of their general interest in voluntary work or from a specific interest in the purpose of an organisation. Perhaps the key task in recruiting new people is to actively sell the benefits (both to the individual and the organisation) of being a volunteer, stressing how volunteering can make a real and significant difference to your organisation.

Here are some ideas about what to include in advertising material.

- A description of the work volunteers actually do.
- What work the organisation as a whole does.
- How a new volunteer can make a significant contribution to the work of your organisation.
- How volunteering can make a difference to the community.
- Benefits of volunteering to the potential volunteer.
- How to find out more and what to do next. This information can be used in various ways to attract new volunteers:
- Put up posters in the local area, advertising for volunteers.
- Place an ad in the local newspaper or use events and special occasions to get coverage from local press and radio (community newsletters, letters to the editor, church magazines, local radio).
- Get existing volunteers, paid staff or clients to tell their friends word of

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mouth often works well as an effective form of recruitment.

- Give a talk or presentation to a targeted audience such as schools, colleges, local employers, job clubs etc.

Potential volunteers may express concerns and fears about working in situations which are unfamiliar, new, or challenging. Addressing these issues will help to clarify what is involved in volunteering and reassure people about their ability to do the work. Here are some suggestions about how to deal with these concerns.

Have one to one discussions or informal interviews with volunteers as a way of finding out more about the work without making a definite commitment.

Stress that no previous experience is necessary if this is appropriate and accurate.

Emphasise that full training will be given before volunteers are expected to carry out any voluntary work.

Offer a trial period that allow volunteers to try out the work without committing themselves fully.

## 2: Selection & Screening

Depending on the nature of your organisation, information, application forms etc can either be sent beforehand, or the interviewer can complete application/registration forms during the interview. Some organisations may require that informal and formal interviews take place. Other pre-selection ideas may include regular open days, videos, slide shows, presentations or tours of your premises and remember to involve existing volunteers.

You will need to think of the following:

- Contacts ~ who will deal with enquiries?
- **Application forms** ~ these should be simple, easy to read and understand
- **Before the interview** ~ eg respond quickly to a volunteer's request for an interview, send out information about the organisation etc
- **On the day of the interview** ~ eg make sure the volunteer is expected, prepare the room for the interview
- **Interview procedure** ~ who will do the interview [2 people is advisable], what questions will you ask etc.
- **Screening/Checking** ~ will you ask for a CRB, how many references will you take up
- **Permissible Restrictions to Recruitment** ~ eg are there gender or age restrictions.

## 3: Induction

Once volunteers have been accepted into the organisation, a good way of getting things started is to have an induction session in which volunteers are introduced to the organisation. Induction is a formal opportunity for new volunteers to ask questions about the organisation, clarify their role and find out what is involved. Good induction should help a volunteer feel part of the organisation and begin to develop a sense of commitment to it.

Induction should include an overview of the work of the organisation, provide information about the aims of the project, the work or services involved and an opportunity to meet other paid workers and volunteers. Induction can be organised in a variety of ways, including on a one to one or group basis.

It is recommended that volunteers are given a handbook as part of their induction, with relevant information such as task descriptions, information about the organisation, policies and procedures etc.

The following should be included in an induction:

- What is your organisation's role/purpose?
- Background e.g. when was it founded, where does it operate, what services does it offer, how many staff and volunteers does it have?
- The role of Volunteers within the organisation
- Support for Volunteers – who will be responsible for supporting the volunteer and dealing with any queries or problems.
- Procedures relevant to their role e.g. how you log phone calls, what resource books you use etc – these are all important. Write down and explain everything – always explain that you may have to explain the obvious.
- Housekeeping - toilet facilities, refreshment facilities, where to leave personal belongings etc.
- Health & Safety - is vital, particularly if you have fire drills at certain times, which means that some volunteers are never present when you need to go through it with them! Tell the volunteer where the fire exits are situated, how to sound the fire alarm and the procedure to follow for evacuation.
- Relevant Policies e.g. No Smoking Policy. Tell the volunteer about allocated areas if they wish to smoke.
- Expenses - how to claim expenses and complete expense forms, show examples.
- **Introductions** – to members of staff, other volunteers and service users.

Induction on a group basis, if there are enough volunteers and resources to do this, is particularly useful as it enables new volunteers to get to know each other, build a sense of team spirit and develop supportive relationships.

It is a good idea to put together an induction pack so that new volunteers can have all the information they need. An induction pack could include a volunteer policy, volunteer agreement, volunteer task description, equal opportunities policy, health and safety policy, information on expenses etc.

## 4: Training

Volunteers should be provided with all the training they need in order to carry out their role. If the task is quite demanding or specialized, then there will be a need to have some specific training sessions before the volunteers can carry out their work. Having clear and simple volunteer task descriptions (see Factsheet 12: Volunteering Policies) will help in identifying training needs. A training programme can then be produced to develop the skills and qualities that are needed to carry out the work.

It will also be helpful to identify any on-going training needs that volunteers may have, so that training programmes can be developed to facilitate volunteers progress in the organisation.

## 5: Support and Supervision

Regular opportunities for support and supervision are important and can help to identify and even prevent overload and burnout, which often results in them leaving the organisation. Good supervision develops the skills of an individual volunteer and seeks to enhance the quality of service the organisation can offer. It is vital that volunteers are adequately supported in their role and that they are genuinely enabled to deal with the demands of their voluntary work. It is also important that volunteers receive regular feedback on the effectiveness of their work so that any issues can be dealt with as they arise.

The format and regularity of support and supervision will depend on the type of voluntary work people are involved in. This can be provided through a one to one arrangement with a line manager, or a named buddy or mentor who could be a more experienced volunteer, available to discuss work related issues in confidence. Support and supervision could also be provided on a group basis which is often more cost effective. Group supervision also has the additional benefits of enabling volunteers to experience a variety of views on the issues being discussed.

It is important that attention is given to having a supportive and safe environment for regular review meetings with volunteers.

## 6: Retaining Volunteers

Once volunteers are working within the organisation it is essential to maintain their motivation and enthusiasm if they are to be retained. Care must be taken to treat volunteers in such a way that they will want to stay with the organisation. Developing activities that meet volunteers individual needs, provide recognition and appreciation of their work and celebrate a sense of achievement will promote self esteem, strengthen commitment and develop a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the organisation.

Some of the issues that need very careful consideration are :

- Regular opportunities to learn new skills
- Sense of personal achievement and contribution to the work of the organisation
- Making a difference to other people's lives, the wider community or environment
- Social needs and making new friends
- Having access to new and different experiences including other forms of voluntary work
- Volunteer appreciation and thanks.

Designing volunteer roles and flexible systems that address these issues, and providing volunteers with good quality induction, training and support is a complex challenge, and yet this is the payback that volunteers increasingly expect from their organisations.

## 7: Further Help

For further information and support, please contact:

Dudley CVS Volunteer Centre  
7 Albion Street  
Brierley Hill  
DY5 3EE

Tel: 01384 267414  
Email: [volunteer@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@dudleycvs.org.uk)

### Useful Websites


[www.dudleycvs.org.uk/volunteering.htm](http://www.dudleycvs.org.uk/volunteering.htm)  
[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

### Useful Publications

Dudley CVS Volunteer Centre has an extensive library of reference resources concerning all areas of Volunteer Management. To request a list of available resources, please contact the Volunteer Centre.

## FURTHER HELP

Dudley Council for Voluntary Service  
7 Albion Street  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 3EE

 01384 573381

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