



4.0 Volunteers

Recruiting, Selecting and Inducting Volunteers

Overview

1. Introduction
2. Recruitment
3. Selection
4. Induction
5. References
6. Further Information

Introduction

Why involve volunteers?

Before involving volunteers, it is worth spending some time considering how they can be best included within your organisation.

It is essential for the organisation to identify tasks that are appropriate for the volunteer to undertake, prior to the recruitment and selection process.

As volunteers do not replace paid workers, they should be viewed as complementing existing staff roles, thus bringing added value to the organisation.



Image: Woman being interviewed

Offering inclusive opportunities helps to reach out to different people from diverse backgrounds. Creating a culture that actively encourages equality, diversity and inclusion will help reach new groups of people who are currently under-represented in your organisation.

It is important to identify who is going to take responsibility for volunteers to ensure that volunteers are fully supported and feel valued by the organisation. Research via the Time Spent Well survey recognises that how organisations respond to volunteers impacts on the volunteers' overall experiences of volunteering.



External Link

A link to the Time Well Spent survey, a national survey into the experience of volunteering across the UK.

[Time Well Spent survey](#)

Consider:

- What level of induction and training will the volunteer require to best support them in their role?
- Will the opportunities you are providing enable the volunteer to develop new skills whilst also using their existing abilities, knowledge and experiences?
- What tasks do you expect them to fulfil?
- How can you best support them to bring their lived experience and knowledge to the organisation?
- How flexible can you be in giving volunteers the opportunity to shape their roles?

Recruitment and Advertising

Once you have a clear idea of the different opportunities you can offer volunteers, the next stage is to think about:

- What kind of person would be interested in those roles?
- Will the opportunities appeal to diverse groups of people? If not, what measures can you take to address this?
- How you will attract them to your organisation
- How can you promote the volunteering opportunities in a way which means that potential volunteers will feel inspired to be part of your organisation?
- What can you do which allows people to sample volunteering in your organisations before making a commitment?
- How can you make your volunteering opportunities accessible?

Where to Advertise?

- Social media platforms
- Register on [Volunteering Wales website](#)
- Schools, colleges, universities, alternative education providers
- Peer recruitment
- Public buildings, such as job centres
- Surgeries
- Shop windows
- Buses
- Local television, newspapers, radio
- Word of mouth
- Local community venues, such as community centres or libraries
- Your website
- Recruitment sites

Where to recruit?

Some of these methods of recruitment may occur in digital or virtual formats, think about how you will approach volunteer recruitment in an online space

- Talk to your local volunteer centre
- Give talks and presentations to interested groups
- Visit groups from diverse communities and talk about ways they can get involved
- Encourage and support ex beneficiaries to volunteer
- Link in with other community events that attract large numbers of people e.g. set up a market stall, fêtes and carnivals
- Attend careers and recruitment fairs
- Social media platforms
- Make links with community and faith groups

When designing printed or online information, you may wish to consider the following:

- Keep the message simple
- Make sure it reflects the nature of the opportunity
- Make it resonate and easy for your target audience to engage with
- Design posters and leaflets which are eye catching and accessible
- Avoid jargon
- Make materials available in community language(s)
- Produce materials that are diverse and will encourage volunteers from all backgrounds

Get your first impressions right

Whilst your organisation is looking for volunteers that will help your organisation or project thrive, the volunteer is looking for an organisation that values the time they are preparing to offer.

Ensure that you are able to show respect for those that approach your organisation with their offer on time by ensuring their calls are answered, voicemails are returned, emails are responded to. If there are delays in your volunteer recruitment process, the best thing to do is to make this clear to your volunteer in the beginning.

Role Descriptions

These are an important part of the planning process in deciding what role volunteers will play in your organisation.

Prior to drawing up a [role description](#), you may want to consider the following questions:

- What tasks do you have that you need volunteers to do?
- How might these tasks be combined to create a volunteer role?
- How much training, support and supervision could you give?
- Is there scope for any volunteer role to develop?
- What skills, qualities, experience would volunteers need to have already?

Selection

The selection process you adopt will depend on your organisation and the activities that volunteers undertake within it. All organisations need to establish a system that will not only suit their needs, but one that does not put unnecessary barriers in the way of potential volunteers. Consider taster sessions to make it easy for people to get involved.

The selection process should be a two-way process. It should enable the organisation to decide on the suitability of potential volunteers whilst enabling volunteers to decide whether they feel suited to the organisation.

If volunteers are unsuitable for their chosen volunteering opportunities and it is not possible to find them an alternative, it is the responsibility of your organisation to be honest.

All staff and volunteers for any position involving **actual and repeated** contact with vulnerable groups (**all children and/or adults with care and support needs due to age, illness or disability**) should be subject to the principles of best recruitment and management practices.

If the role is working with an **individual or multiple people who are deemed a vulnerable group** (adults and/or children) or the position is exempted from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974, you must make it clear **from the first stages** of recruitment **and throughout** that you have a right to see **their** criminal record history and that a **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check will be asked for. Requests for such information will be in accordance with the **DBS Code of Practice** and in line with any safeguarding policy that the organisation may have.



Rather than emphasising their unsuitability, highlight their skills and qualities and direct them to their nearest volunteer centre. See Information Sheet:

4.1 Thinking About Volunteering

You must also have a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, more information about this can be found on the [UK Government website](#).

The volunteer must also be made aware that they will be unable to work with vulnerable groups in regulated activity if they have been barred by [Disclosure and Barring Services \(DBS\)](#)



Promote subscription to the DBS Update Service
[DBS Update Service](#)

Volunteer Application Forms

If you decide to use a volunteer application form, then be clear about what information you need and why you need it. Keep the form as simple as possible. Consider what mechanisms you can put in to allow people with different support needs to apply.

NB: open days where experienced volunteers can help people fill out the application form (especially important for those with literacy issues or where English is not the first language).



Rather than emphasising their unsuitability, highlight their skills and qualities and direct them to their nearest volunteer centre. For more information visit:
[Volunteering Wales Website](#)

Interviewing/Getting to Know Your Volunteers

The word 'interview' can be very off-putting and unless you need to conduct a formal interview the term 'come in for a chat' or 'come in to talk' will put potential volunteers at ease.

When meeting with a potential volunteer you may wish to cover the following areas:

- What attracted them to your organisation
- What experience they may have, including any lived experience
- What, if any relevant skills, knowledge and interests they have
- Are there any health considerations or support needs relevant to their volunteering which require adaptations or reasonable adjustments
- What their expectations might be and what they hope to gain from volunteering
- what times/days they are likely to be available

Induction

Once you have recruited your volunteers you will need to ensure they are provided with adequate support and supervision. Support comes in many forms, and often a well-organised induction session and pack will provide volunteers with the support they initially require. Induction should consist of more than simply giving volunteers policies to read and introducing them to other volunteers and staff.

Getting the induction process right can help your organisation retain its volunteers for longer and ensure that volunteers have positive and rewarding experiences.

When volunteers start with your organisation you may want to:

- Welcome them to their place of volunteering, show them around the site, office, community, or, if a virtual location, show them around the virtual spaces they will be using.
- Show them where they will be volunteering (this may be where they will sit within an office, a virtual space they will spend the most time in, an outdoor space they will be looking after). Show them where they can find equipment or PPE they may need.
- Explore their needs and any reasonable adjustments required, including safe and healthy practices in their place of volunteering.
- Ensure the volunteer knows where they can access refreshments, toilets and outdoor space. Encourage regular breaks.
- Find ways to introduce them to your existing staff and volunteer teams in ways which feel manageable for the volunteer.
- Explain who they can go to if they have any questions or problems. Preparing a number of colleagues to be available to the volunteer can ensure the volunteer feels comfortable approaching these individuals.
- Explain when and how to claim volunteer expenses, provide the correct documentation.
- Explain your organisation's policy on volunteers using organisational resources for personal use (i.e. **using the internet within the office**)
- Set up time for the volunteer to shadow or talk with other experienced volunteers or paid member of staff
- Gain all other important information required to ensure the volunteer remains safe and comfortable during their time volunteering with you, such as emergency contact details

- Remind them of their volunteering role, what this includes and what it doesn't. Allow time for questions and ensuring understanding.

These are informal points, but they are important because they help volunteers feel more comfortable within your organisation. Organisational policies and procedures are better left until volunteers have gone through day-to-day practicalities. If you do it this way, volunteers will feel more relaxed and competent when you move onto more complex areas.

By this time, volunteers should feel more confident about asking you to explain anything they do not fully understand. When you move onto formal matters, ensure volunteers understand the issues by going through policies and procedures with them.

These More Formal Issues Could Include:

- Your organisation's policies and procedures
e.g. equal opportunities, health and safety, safeguarding
- The history, ethos, culture of the organisation
- Organisational infrastructure
- Organisational behaviours and values
- How to deal with complaints and areas of concern
- The volunteer agreement

The volunteer may find it useful if the information, they are given, is kept in a handbook or pack.

The rest of the induction period will be taken up with on-going training and trying out some volunteering tasks. The duration and depth of induction will depend on the role and level of resources available.

If you work closely with volunteers during this initial period it will provide you with a better picture of how they work, what support they will need and what they are hoping to gain.

Volunteers' Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteering is a two-way process. Whilst volunteers bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience, an organisation can teach volunteers new skills too.

Here are some suggested rights and responsibilities, however, this is not an exhaustive list and you may choose some of your own.

Volunteers have the right to:

- Know what is expected of them
e.g. **code of conduct**
- Clearly specified lines of support
- Access to named manager
- Be insured
- To be appreciated and respected
- To know their rights
- Be paid out of pocket expenses
- Be trained and prepared for their role
- Be free from discrimination or harassment
- Offered support and opportunities to develop in role
- Not replace a paid worker but complement and add value
- Volunteer in a safe environment

Organisations can expect volunteers to:

- Be reliable
- Be trustworthy
- Respect confidentiality
- Make the most of training and support
- Carry out tasks which reflect organisational aims, values and behaviours
- Operate within agreed guidelines, remit and role
- Respect organisational policies and procedures

References

Most organisations will ask volunteers to provide two references. This is essential especially when the organisation works with people who are vulnerable, for example, children, adults in regulated services etc.

In these situations, asking for a reference from a friend or family member may not be appropriate, whereas a reference from a previous employer, tutor or teacher would be ideal.

Providing references may be difficult for those who have been unemployed for a long period of time, young people who have limited work experience or those who are volunteering as part of their recovery – consider what would be acceptable to your organisation.

When requesting references, be clear about what information you require, such as reliability, punctuality, honesty, ability to handle money, conduct around people who are vulnerable.

Make sure the reference form is short and concise and relevant to the role – it will be useful to supply a copy of the role description applied for.

To ensure the form is returned promptly, it could be created into a digitalised questionnaire format and sent via email. Follow up with a phone call if appropriate.

Further Information

Volunteering Code of Practice

Wales Council of Voluntary Action

<https://wcva.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Code-of-Practice-Cod-Ymarfer.pdf>

Investing in Volunteers - Standards

Investing in Volunteers

<https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/download-the-standard>



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.