Introduction to volunteering

What is volunteering?

Volunteering is an activity which:

- Is undertaken freely, by choice

- Is undertaken to be of public/community benefit

- Is not undertaken for financial gain

Volunteering can take many different forms and cover all types of activities. Many people may understand volunteering to involve making a regular commitment of time to a specific organisation (which we call 'formal volunteering'). However other opportunities may be less structured, such as supporting a one-off event, or giving unpaid help to individuals at a community level. The type of volunteering will depend upon the need that is

being addressed. In this section we are focusing on how your group can organise **formal** volunteering opportunities to support the work of your organisation.

What can volunteers do?

Volunteers can undertake a whole range of tasks to help your organisation. Here are some examples of the types of activity volunteers could do:
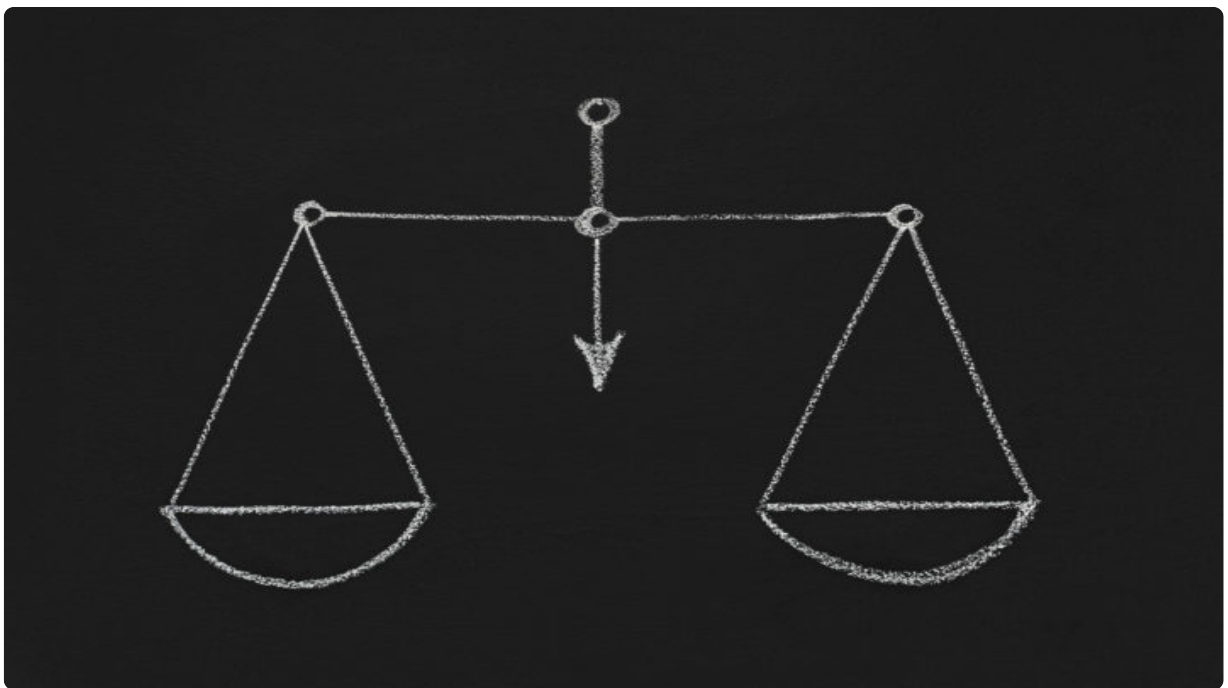
- Admin/ office tasks
- Catering / cafe
- Talks / events / being an ambassador
- Fundraising
- Maintenance / gardening
- Marketing
- Online sales / bookings
- Reception / ticket sales
- Social media
- Stewarding
- Mentoring / coaching

Who can volunteer?

Volunteers can be any age and from any background. They might be young or retired, studying or working and have a range of different experiences, knowledge and skills to bring to your organisation.

Every volunteer has their own reasons for volunteering. These include supporting a cause that's meaningful to them, meeting other people, using their skills or experience to help others, or doing something completely new.

If your organisation is involving volunteers, it is best practice to try to draw volunteers from across your community with a diverse range of experiences and skills. When involving volunteers, organisations are encouraged to take a proactive approach to inclusion, seeking to understand how volunteering opportunities can be as inclusive and accessible as possible by removing barriers and provide appropriate support.

Other resources

For an introduction on how to approach this in your organisation take a look at our information sheet – Equality Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering.

Further information about how to recruit volunteers is in our section How do I find volunteers?