

Creating volunteer role descriptions

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Introduction



A well-written role description can support recruitment, help manage risk and provide a useful reference point during a volunteer's induction and ongoing involvement.

By clearly outlining the role's purpose, tasks, and boundaries, you can ensure volunteers feel informed, valued, and confident in their contribution.

Below is a template that can be used to ensure organisations include all the relevant information that a prospective volunteer would like to know about a role.

Volunteering Support

If you feel that you would like some support in creating a Volunteering Role Description you can contact your local Volunteer Centre

Who is a volunteer role description for?

Volunteer role descriptions are primarily for volunteers—both current and potential—helping them understand what a role involves and whether it's the right fit for them. They are also useful for staff and volunteer managers, providing clarity when recruiting, supporting, and supervising volunteers. Additionally, funders may find them helpful in understanding the scope and impact of volunteer involvement.

You can use a well-crafted role description to:

- Promote opportunities on the digital volunteering platform, Volunteering Wales www.volunteering-wales.net
- Shape social media posts, or guide other ways of advertising your role
- A clear and engaging description makes it easier to attract and support the right individuals and / or groups of volunteers.

Why create volunteer role descriptions?

By outlining what the role involves — and just as importantly, what it doesn't — it provides a framework for supervision, enabling both parties to discuss the scope of the role and tasks currently included.

Creating clear and well-structured volunteer role descriptions is an essential part of good volunteer management. These descriptions help establish a common understanding of the role, provide clarity, and support both volunteers and those who coordinate them.

However, it's important to remember that volunteer roles are different from paid positions — volunteering is a freely given, unpaid, and non-contractual arrangement. To reflect this, avoid terms like 'work' or 'essential criteria,' which may imply employment.

A well-structured volunteer role description is a key tool for managing volunteers effectively. It helps both volunteers and managers understand the role's purpose, boundaries, and responsibilities. By outlining what the role involves — and just as importantly, what it doesn't — it provides a framework for supervision, enabling both parties to discuss the scope of the role and tasks currently included. This can help ensure volunteers feel supported while managers can confidently oversee their contribution.

Role descriptions also help identify training and support needs.

By defining key tasks, organisations can pinpoint areas where volunteers may require guidance or development, ensuring they have the skills and confidence to carry out their role successfully.

For organisations offering flexibility, role descriptions provide a useful reference point. If a volunteer needs adjustments to their role, having a clear outline makes it easier to tailor while maintaining consistency and ensuring essential tasks are covered.

Additionally, volunteer role descriptions support resource planning by helping organisations assess what is needed—whether that’s equipment, staff support, or budget considerations—to enable volunteers to carry out their roles effectively.

By providing structure while allowing for adaptability, role descriptions create a positive and well-managed volunteering experience, ensuring both volunteers and organisations get the most out of their partnership.

How to approach creating a volunteering role description



Co-create

When developing a volunteer role description, consider involving those who will be impacted by the role — staff, stakeholders, service users, and volunteers. Co-creating role descriptions, where capacity allows, ensures they are realistic, inclusive, and reflective of what volunteers can, and would like to, genuinely contribute.

Think flexibility

Flexibility is key. A role that can adapt to different skills, interests, and availability makes volunteering more accessible to a wider range of people. If a role description is becoming too long, consider whether it should be broken into multiple roles to better suit different volunteers’ strengths and circumstances.

Who might be interested in the role

It is worth considering who this role might be attractive to, or how the role might be tailored to attract a more specific volunteer i.e. would this role work well as a short task and finish activity that could be completed in a finite amount of time or if available at a certain time or location, would it encourage a volunteer from a different background or life stage?

Clarity

Keep descriptions clear, concise, and engaging. Use plain language and frame the role as an exciting opportunity rather than an overwhelming list of requirements.

Think of it as a marketing tool — you want to attract volunteers, not intimidate them.

A good role description should fit on one page and provide a snapshot of what the role involves without overloading information.

By prioritising clarity, flexibility, and inclusivity, you can create role descriptions that encourage more people to get involved and feel confident in their contribution.

Volunteer role description [template]

Title:

Insert role title

Volunteer Manager/Team/Support:

Insert who the volunteer is responsible to, including contact details

Location:

Insert where the volunteer will carry out their tasks. Office-based, remote, hybrid

When:

How often, what day or times, or types of times e.g. office hours/mostly weekdays but some weekends and evenings. It is important to demonstrate flexibility in use of language to avoid an unintentional employment contract.

Purpose:

Outline the purpose of the volunteer role. Who does the role support? How does this role help the organisation, community, or individuals? This summary should be attractive and emotive. It is your sales pitch for the role.

What's involved:

Outline the key/main tasks that the volunteer will do. It may be a good idea to list these in order of priority. These can be flexible and should be discussed as part of a volunteer interview or induction. You may choose to format these as bullet points or a numbered list for ease.

What we offer:

List the benefits and support offered to a potential volunteer in this role. You can find some examples below.

- Be part of our organisation and support us to make a more significant difference together
- Join a friendly team who are passionate about [INSERT CAUSE]
- Peer support
- Induction and training
- Expenses reimbursement
- An opportunity to use your skills and experiences

- Meet new people

Key considerations:

(Use this section to list any requirements for the role that are important for a potential volunteer to know before they register their interest.)

To join our organisation in this volunteer role we are looking for individuals that,

- Are enthusiastic about the volunteer role
- Are willing to learn

(Other examples could include the following, however we encourage organisations to only list genuine necessities to undertake the role to ensure the role remains inclusive)

- Able and willing to undertake a DBS check (if relevant to the role)
- Are aged a particular age (if the role necessitates a age restriction)
- Have a driver's license and/or access to a car (if the role requires this)
- Live within a 'x' mile radius of [specific location] (if location of volunteer is relevant)
- Are able to communicate in [particular language] (if required for the role)
- Able and willing to undertake [insert any specific accredited or intensive training, or exam requirements]
- Key skill(s) if necessary for the main tasks

Role description created: [dd/mm/yy]

Role description review date: [dd/mm/yy]

Further information

Once your volunteer role description is ready, make sure you share it on www.volunteering-wales.net to start recruiting the volunteers you need.

If you would like to find out more about delivering high quality volunteer programmes, learn more about the Investing in Volunteers standard – <https://investinginvolunteers.co.uk/>

For guidance on Creating a Volunteering Policy – <https://knowledgehub.cymru/resources/creating-a-volunteering-policy/>

For guidance on preparing your Volunteering Policy, you can use this template to get you started – <https://knowledgehub.cymru/resources/model-volunteering-policy/>