

A guide to enhancing volunteer satisfaction and retainment

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The link between volunteer satisfaction and retention

Volunteers give their time for many reasons – to make a difference, learn new skills or connect with others. When volunteers feel valued, supported and part of your organisation, they're more likely to stay motivated and continue contributing.

Creating a positive volunteering experience benefits both the volunteer and the organisation. It build trust, strengthens your community impact and improves retention.

This page shares practical ways to create a positive volunteer experience and build long-term satisfaction.

Did you know?

92% of volunteers in the **Time Well Spent (2023)** survey said they were satisfied with their volunteering experience which is a testament to the effective support and good volunteer management being applied in volunteer – involving organisations

8 key factors that influence satisfaction

Research shows that volunteer satisfaction is shaped by several key factors. Based on our expertise in the sector, we recommend auditing your roles against these eight factors.

- **Inclusive:** Offer roles that are open and accessible to everyone.
- **Flexible:** Adapt volunteering opportunities to suit people's circumstances and commitments.
- **Impactful:** Communicate the difference volunteers make to the outcomes of the services delivered by your organisation

- **Connected:** think of different ways in which volunteers can build relationships with others and feel part of something bigger.
- **Balanced:** Provide structure without making volunteering feel like a paid job.
- **Enjoyable:** Keep experiences positive, social, and rewarding.
- **Voluntary:** Ensure volunteers are aware that their commitment is their choice
- **Meaningful:** Support volunteers to give their time in ways that matter to them.

Ensuring volunteer satisfaction while meeting organisational objectives requires a careful balance.

Volunteers should feel supported, valued, and engaged, but not weighed down by unnecessary rules or formality. Organisations can achieve this by providing appropriate guidance and management, improving the volunteer experience, and avoiding processes that make volunteering feel like a job.

Good practices for involving and supporting volunteers

Volunteers who feel involved and supported are more likely to stay engaged.

Involvement

- Include volunteers in meetings, training sessions, and social events where appropriate.
- Encourage them to bring their lived experiences to their volunteering roles and share their ideas.
- Offer participation in staff and volunteer satisfaction surveys or at mixed staff and volunteer focus groups
- Act on volunteer feedback and show how it shapes your service.

This ensures that volunteers not only feel involved but also know that they have influence in the running of the organisation.

Support

- Make sure every volunteer knows who to contact for help or advice.
- Tailor support to each role and person – for example, a volunteer counsellor may need different supervision than a shop volunteer.
- Review the support needs regularly – the amount or type of support needed may decrease as confidence and experience are gained or increase at times of personal stress for the volunteer.
- Provide relevant training and induction to ensure each volunteer can confidently carry out their tasks
- Pair new volunteers with a buddy or mentor- that might be an experienced volunteer
- Reimburse expenses promptly to remove barriers to participation.
- Signpost volunteers to other specialist support services and groups, telephone and one-to-one support if needed.



Tip: The process of claiming out of pocket expenses must be swift and easy so as not to cause hardship or embarrassment. This is an important equality issue and is often mentioned by volunteers as a barrier to their retention or feelings of not being valued.

Effective volunteer supervision: Maximising impact

Regular supervision or check-ins are vital to volunteer satisfaction. They offer time to talk, reflect, and celebrate progress.

Use these meetings to:

- Express gratitude, give feedback on the positive difference the volunteer is making and recognise achievements
- Review how the role is being carried out.
- Engage with volunteers to understand what is important to them and how they can give their time in a fulfilling way
- Discuss training or development needs.
- Identify any extra support required.
- Explore other ways for volunteers to get involved.
- Address any issues early on- e.g. arising from relationships with other staff, volunteers and service users
- Ask for suggestions to improve the service.

In preparing for supervision, whether formal or informal, ensure that the basic principles are followed, i.e. the time you give to an individual volunteer should be exclusively for them, be free from distractions and take place at regular intervals. You may want to keep personal supervision records, copies of which should be given to volunteers.

Sometimes what you offer as ‘supervision’ may be from a volunteers’ perspective an informal ‘catch up’. However it is done, it is the regularity and the giving of your time and attention that is the most important. For a more formal approach, refer to the [model supervision guidelines document](#).

Volunteer recognition ideas

Recognising volunteers' time and contribution builds confidence and loyalty.

Ways to show appreciation

- A simple 'thank you' would be welcomed by many volunteers, who give their time freely to a cause they care about.
- Invite volunteers to share their stories or represent your organisation.
- Provide small tokens of thanks, such as certificates or by hosting appreciation events.
- Offer training opportunities that build confidence and skills.

Please note: Make sure that training provided is relevant to the role undertaken by the volunteer. Ask your local volunteer centre about support and training offered locally.

Formal recognition opportunities

- **Local Recognition Schemes:** There are local volunteer recognition schemes within most CVCs across Wales.
- **Local High Sheriff Awards:** Every county has a High Sheriff that covers their area.

If you would like to find out more about what is available in specific locations, [contact your local volunteer centre](#).

- [Volunteering Wales:](#) Volunteers can log their hours online.
- [Tempo Time Credits:](#) offer credits in return for volunteering hours that can be redeemed for recreational vouchers. Organisations must be registered to the scheme for volunteers to be eligible to gain credits.
- [Campaign: Annual UK Volunteers' Week \(Starting on the first Monday of June\):](#) is an ideal opportunity to celebrate and to congratulate volunteers for all their contribution to the organisation.
- [Campaign: #iwill Week:](#) is an annual week (in November), to share and celebrate the stories of young people that get involved in social action.
- [Welsh Charity Awards:](#) National scheme that includes several categories for volunteer achievements.
- [Wales Ethnic Diversity Sports Awards \(WEDSA\):](#) National scheme that includes a category for sports related volunteer of the year award.
- [St David Awards:](#) National awards of Wales, which recognise volunteers, community and environmental champions and young people for the contributions they make to Wales.
- [The Diana Award:](#) Established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, The Diana Award is the most prestigious accolade a young person aged 9-25 years can receive for their social action or humanitarian work.

Remember:

Recognition doesn't have to cost much — a personal thank-you or a handwritten note can mean just as much as a formal award. Time, attention and appreciation go a long way.

Further information



[Recruiting, selecting and inducting volunteers](#)

For more information on volunteer recruitment, see this resource.