

# MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers need support, feedback and encouragement. What approach you take depends on the nature of the organisation and the roles of the volunteer. This factsheet outlines some things to consider in an easy-to-read step-by-step process.

## Key Words

Volunteer Handbooks – information that will be helpful for volunteers as part of their day-to-day work for the organisation. Although not as important as a volunteer policy, handbooks can be extremely useful for volunteers

## Step 1: Recruitment

The first step in good volunteer management is to have an appropriate recruitment process with clear, specific roles for your volunteers. Taking on volunteers to help out in general, in an ad hoc way, could quickly lead to overload, de-motivation and ultimately to losing volunteers. See the Volunteers: Recruitment and Selection factsheet for further information.

## Step 2: Induction

It is vital that volunteers receive a full, planned induction when they first start volunteering with your organisation. The induction process should make them feel welcome and provide them with the practical information that they need in order to successfully carry out their role. Things to cover in an induction are:

- Introduce them to other staff and volunteers
- Show them around the building and the place they'll be working (lockers, storage, kitchen facilities, fire exits) and show them how to use any equipment they will be using as part of their voluntary work
- Provide a named person for questions/problems
- The structure of the working day/shift

- The system for claiming expenses
- Any other important policies/procedures that they may need to know about (eg complaints procedure, health and safety, equal opportunities)

Try not to overwhelm the volunteer with too much information on their first session. You might find it useful to develop a 'Volunteer Handbook' which the volunteer can refer to and that you can work through together as part of their induction.

### **Step 3: Training and support**

The support, supervision and training that a volunteer receives must be appropriate both to the role they carry out and to their individual needs. Some people may need extra support or additional training in order to complete the tasks they have been set. Do not prejudge what support is needed – ask them!

Supervisions are a useful way of 'checking in' with volunteers to find out what has gone well, what not so well, how they are finding the work, and if they have any training needs. Give volunteers clear feedback, including areas for improvement as well as praise. Using peer support or a 'buddying system' can be another way of providing support to volunteers; it can also be a useful progression route for your more experienced volunteers

### **Expenses**

Volunteers should not have to incur costs to volunteer for an organisation. It is good practice to offer to pay all volunteers 'out of pocket' expenses for costs incurred while volunteering, otherwise some people will be prevented from volunteering. Expenses could be paid for the following:

- Travel or mileage costs (such as petrol)
- Meals (usually if volunteering for over a minimum agreed period)
- Postage and telephone costs if working from home
- Care of dependents
- Protective clothing or essential equipment

Organisations should only pay volunteers actual 'out-of-pocket expenses' and not fixed amounts per session or lump sums. Paying more than actual out-of-pocket expenses can cause two main problems:

- Volunteers may be classed as employees
- Volunteers may be penalised by the Benefits Agency or be liable to taxation

#### **Step 4: Recognition and rewards**

It is important to let your volunteers know that you value their work. Simple things, like thank you cards and certificates for completing a set number of volunteer hours can make all the difference. Organising celebration and social events for volunteers can be a great way to let them know they are appreciated. Always ask a volunteer's permission before nominating them for an award or publically thanking them for their work.

#### **Step 5: Exit interviews**

When a volunteer leaves, you should try and conduct an exit interview. This will help you to find out why they have left. This can help you to improve your volunteering programme for future volunteers. It might help also you to demonstrate the positive outcomes of your volunteer programme, for example, if someone leaves to go into employment.



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