

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT SCREENING & MANAGING

Guide for community and
voluntary organisations



RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Getting enough of the right people in the right roles is one of the biggest challenges of working with volunteers. This factsheet is designed to help you think through volunteer recruitment and selection processes to help you find the right people for your work in three easy steps.

Step 1: Plan your volunteers

Before you recruit new volunteers make sure you:

- Develop a clear role description to cover what the volunteer will be doing.
- Communicate with existing staff within the organisation about what the volunteer will be doing. Ensure that staff have a good understanding of what volunteering is and why you want to use volunteers.
- Draw up a volunteering policy for your organisation. This should cover: your volunteer recruitment processes, expenses policy, complaints and grievance procedures, insurance details, health and safety and risk assessment information, training and supervision arrangements and may incorporate a volunteer agreement.

Having these things in place before you recruit volunteers will ensure all parties understand what is expected of them, demonstrates a fair, transparent recruitment and selection process, and shows that you value volunteers.

Step 2: Recruitment

There are a number of ways of getting the message out to the general public when looking for volunteers. Whichever method you opt for you need to ensure a clear and concise message. Try to do the following:

State what the role is, in clear language that is easy to understand.

- State how the volunteer role contributes to the overall aim of the project/ how the volunteer will make a difference.
- Consider the motivations of volunteers, e.g. gaining new skills, meeting people, getting work experience.
- Include the practicalities: when/ where will it take place, who to contact for more information, and whether training will be provided etc.

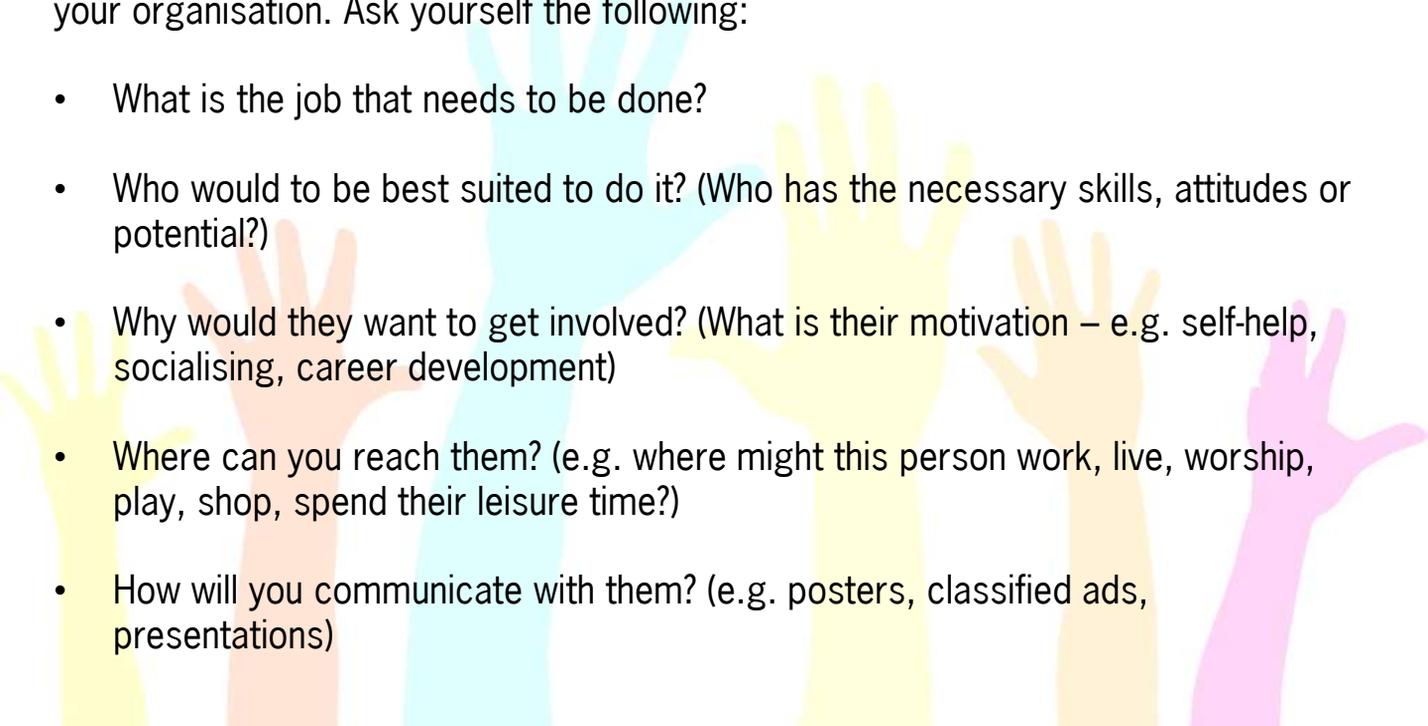
Different types of recruitment techniques:

'WARM BODY' RECRUITMENT – when recruiting for roles that apply to most people (because no specific skills are required or because most people can be taught the skills).

Methods of 'warm body' recruitment might include:

- Leaflets/posters – distributed in libraries, Job Centres, colleges, youth and community centres or even the local supermarket
- Local media – place an ad in a newspaper, radio or circulate an advert through community newsletters and email bulletins. Be aware that you may have to pay for adverts in the press, so this cost will have to be considered when you plan your recruitment.
- Talks, presentations and events – keep presentations lively or use an interactive method. Perhaps one of your existing volunteers could be trained to deliver presentations or could look after information stands at events. Your existing volunteers are great advocates for your organisation. Be ready to sign people up straight away and follow up any interest quickly. Make a point of specifically asking people to volunteer for your organisation. National Volunteers' Week is 1st-7th June every year. This is a great time to get involved in local events and promote your volunteering opportunities.
- Your local Volunteer Centre or brokerage – Register with them and they will be able to upload your volunteering opportunities

Targeted recruitment – works best when the role requires a specific skill or when you wish to recruit from a group currently underrepresented in your organisation. Ask yourself the following:

- What is the job that needs to be done?
 - Who would be best suited to do it? (Who has the necessary skills, attitudes or potential?)
 - Why would they want to get involved? (What is their motivation – e.g. self-help, socialising, career development)
 - Where can you reach them? (e.g. where might this person work, live, worship, play, shop, spend their leisure time?)
 - How will you communicate with them? (e.g. posters, classified ads, presentations)
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You could start by identifying the common factors amongst the volunteers currently doing the role to show you the kind of person who can do the job. Relevant factors may include background or occupation.

Network or 'concentric circles' recruitment – a cost-effective method using word-of-mouth but in a more proactive way. It focuses on those people already connected to your organisation. For example, who do your volunteers know outside of their voluntary work? Could you use those links to bring in more volunteers? – for instance, maybe one of your volunteers could put up posters in their place of work. One pitfall of this method is that like attracts like and is unlikely to bring you a diverse group of volunteers.

Recruiting for diversity – for many organisations it is important that their staff and volunteer base reflects the demographics of the community that they work within. There are a great many benefits of having a diverse range of volunteers who bring different skills and experiences to your organisation. By using a variety of recruitment methods and accessible marketing material, your volunteer role will appeal to a wider variety of people. You could also consider using positive action initiatives or targeted recruitment to diversify your volunteer base.

Step 3: Selection

Selecting volunteers is about finding a good match between the volunteer and the opportunity that is on offer. There are a number of selection procedures that are commonly used by organisations involving volunteers. It is important that the procedure you use will reflect the role that the volunteer will do and the culture/ work of the organisation. For instance, volunteers with a higher degree of responsibility can expect to go through a more detailed selection process.

- Application forms – keep them simple, only ask questions that are relevant, and state what you will do with the information provided and how you will use it.
- Face-to-face meetings – (e.g. informal chats or more formal interviews). This gives you the opportunity to tell the potential volunteer more about the role, the organisation and to answer any questions they have. It's also an opportunity to ask them a few questions to gauge their suitability for the role. Face-to-face meetings are as much about the volunteer finding out about you, as they are about you finding out about them.
- References – it is best practice to ask for at least two references. Send the referee information about the role and ask about things like the reliability and suitability of the candidate for your role.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

“The purpose of screening volunteers is to ensure that the appropriate volunteers are recruited for the appropriate projects”

Volunteering England

DBS disclosures are used to check if someone has a criminal record. It is just one way of reducing the risk of recruiting new staff or volunteers who may be unsuitable to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

There are three types of DBS check or disclosure:

Standard – This will show a person’s filtered convictions, cautions, warnings and reprimands that are held on the police national computer

Enhanced – This check shows everything that the Standard check does, plus additional discretionary background information from local police forces

Enhanced with barred list check – This check shows everything that the Enhanced check does, plus an additional check of the appropriate ‘barred list’ for the work being done

The check should be used alongside an effective recruitment policy, training and supervision of workers (including volunteers) in order to raise concerns about an individual, because disclosure checks are not foolproof: some child sex offenders have no relevant criminal record.

When to check

Checks should only be carried out on people who qualify under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975). These positions often include working with children and vulnerable adults on a regular basis in a caring, supervisory, training or teaching capacity. It is illegal to conduct a DBS check on someone whose role does not qualify them for a check. Some staff are eligible for a check and some must have a check due to the activities they do in their role. This type of activity is called ‘Regulated Activity’

What is Regulated Activity?

Regulated Activity – type of work that means people conducting this activity must be DBS checked at 'Enhanced with barred list check' level:

Regulated Activities for working with adults are:

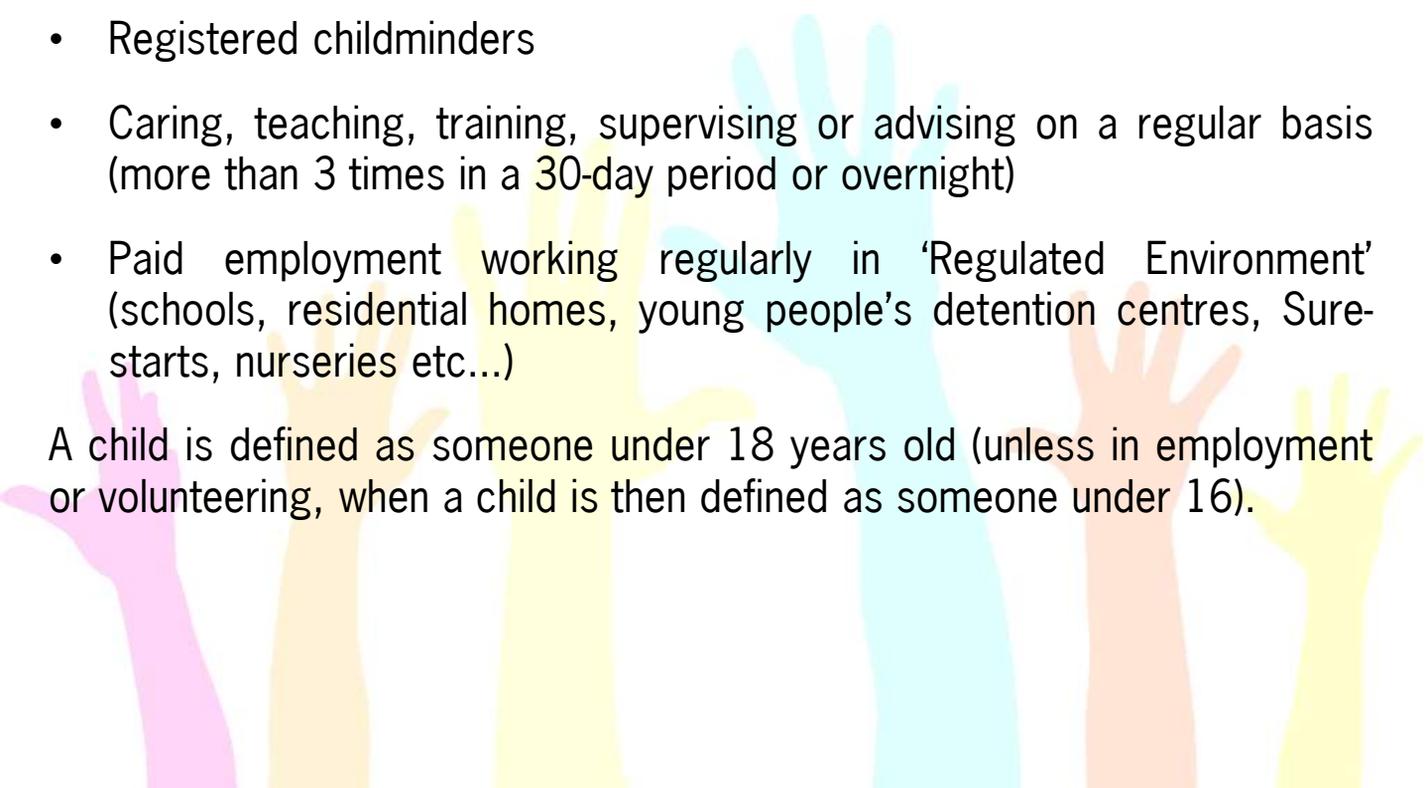
- Providing health care (inc. counselling and psychotherapy)
- Providing social work
- Providing personal care (washing, dressing, feeding etc.....)
- Providing legal advocacy
- Managing or spending a person's money (due to their incapacity)
- Conveyance of a person (driving, escorting etc....in a role) due to their incapacity
- Directly managing a person in regulated activity

Regulated Activities for working with children are:

All of the above, plus:

- Registered foster carers
- Registered childminders
- Caring, teaching, training, supervising or advising on a regular basis (more than 3 times in a 30-day period or overnight)
- Paid employment working regularly in 'Regulated Environment' (schools, residential homes, young people's detention centres, Sure-starts, nurseries etc...)

A child is defined as someone under 18 years old (unless in employment or volunteering, when a child is then defined as someone under 16).



People undertaking voluntary work which is considered a 'Regulated Activity' will require an Enhanced DBS disclosure with barred list check. It is against the law for an individual who is barred from working with a particular group (adult or children) to seek employment (paid or unpaid) working with that particular group which requires 'Regulated Activities' to be performed. It is also an offence to employ someone as outlined above. So, you should make it clear at the beginning of the recruitment process if a role requires a DBS disclosure and at which level the check will be made.

It is not illegal for people who are barred from working with a particular group to apply for work with that group if no regulated activity is being undertaken.

Eligible roles are those where the organisation has a choice to DBS check a volunteer (it is advised that you should check a volunteer who is in a role that is eligible for a check). For adults it includes all roles that do not involve 'Regulated Activity' but are included on the ROA 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975) and can include roles like adult teaching, mentoring, support and befriending. In general, the adult must be classed as 'vulnerable' according to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and be in receipt of a service that also qualifies under that act. For children it includes roles that are done less regularly than the 'Regulated frequency' or in a reasonably supervised capacity (volunteers only).

It is very important to ensure that you are checking appropriately and that you are entitled to do so. It is against the law to DBS check someone who you have no entitlement to check.

DBS certificates

DBS certificates can only be requested by DBS registered organisations and have to follow a strict process and rules. Most checks take between 2-4 weeks to be returned. It is, therefore, worth considering roles that your volunteers can undertake while they are waiting for their checks to come back. This will help to ensure they do not lose interest while they are waiting and will give you the opportunity to see how they get on in your organisation.

If your organisation is not registered to carry out DBS checks you will need to approach an umbrella body (your local Volunteer Centre may be able to help) who will assist you through the process and make sure you have the correct policies and procedures in place. Be aware that, whilst DBS checks for volunteers are free, umbrella bodies usually charge an administration fee for each check.

The DBS certificate is only issued to the individual applicant; you will need to instruct your volunteer to show you (or the appropriate person in your organisation) their certificate so that they can be deemed suitable to work in the environment that they applied to get the certificate for. When they present the certificate you should:

- Make a record of the name of the applicant, the date of issue and the reference number of the certificate. BUT do not record specific convictions or photocopy the certificate
- If it contains conviction data, you should record that the certificate was not clear and then either record that you deemed the person suitable or not
- Only share information with people involved in the recruitment process (these should usually be named persons within your organisation)
- If an individual has supplied a registered certificate with the Update Service, then you will need to follow that process in order to use the certificate – www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service

What if the person has criminal convictions?

Just because a person has a criminal record does not mean they cannot volunteer. In fact, about one quarter of the working-age population in the UK has some kind of criminal record, if you ruled all of them out of volunteering you would greatly reduce your pool of available volunteers. You should, therefore, consider:

- The nature of the offence – whether it is relevant to the volunteering role, how long ago was it, their attitude to the offence, the circumstances surrounding the offence and the extent to which they have changed
- The nature and setting of the volunteer role
- The volunteer's overall suitability to carry out the role

It is a prerequisite of every organisation that uses the DBS processes and services to have a recruitment of re-offenders' policy.

Duty to refer

If you remove a volunteer from a role involving 'Regulated Activity', or they leave whilst they are under investigation for allegedly causing harm, or posing a risk of harm, you must by law inform the Disclosure and Barring Service. Failure to do so is an offence and will carry a significant penalty. This is usually coordinated through a Safeguarding Officer or your local authority social services

Beyond DBS checks

DBS checks are just one piece in the jigsaw of screening volunteers. They are by no means foolproof, and only provide a record of what a person has been caught and convicted of up to the date that the check is carried out. They are not intended to be used either as a character reference or as a way of guaranteeing a person's suitability for a role.

When recruiting any volunteer:

It is advisable to take up references, usually from two referees, and it is also useful to ask specific questions linked to the role to guide referees (e.g., How long have you known the person? Do you think he/she is suitable to work with children/adults? Would you recommend this person to carry out this role?).

- Have a clear volunteering task description and recruitment process.
- Provide volunteers with an induction and relevant training – you could even incorporate taster sessions or a shadowing period as part of your volunteer recruitment, giving you a chance to get to know new volunteers.
- Make sure volunteers have regular supervision and opportunities to reflect on their experience.

As an organisation, make sure that you have robust policies and procedures in place covering equal opportunities, volunteer recruitment and selection, risk assessments, data protection and, of course, safeguarding. Volunteer codes of conduct are also a useful reference point for volunteers about what is acceptable behaviour.

It is also essential that relevant insurance cover is in place to cover volunteers who work for your organisation as they are not automatically considered a 'third party' for purposes of your public liability insurance. In addition, you need to check with your insurance company that you are covered for any work that volunteers do on your behalf.



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.

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.

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 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.

GLOSSARY

Volunteer Agreement – a description of the arrangement between an organisation and a volunteer. It informs the volunteer what they can expect from the organisation and what they agree to do. It is not a legally binding contract.

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) – the organisation that handles all criminal record checks

Portability – the use of a DBS check from one position in an organisation that is used later for another position in another organisation, the DBS has created 'The Update Service' so individuals can register their certificates so that they can be used portably

Screening – the process of ensuring that a volunteer is suitable for a potential role and to manage any risks to children and vulnerable adults in recruiting them into that role

Barred Lists – these are lists of people who are not allowed to work with children and/or adults in certain types of work, called 'Regulated Activity' (see section to the left)

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





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