

# Managing Volunteers Guide

## Welcome

Volunteers are a fantastic resource. Good volunteers are worth their weight in gold and need to be cherished.

This toolkit is full of information to help you to recruit, involve and retain volunteers. It contains advice, guidance and helpful appendices to guide you through the HR, legal and many practical issues you may face in working with volunteers. It will help you to offer a positive and supportive experience to all your volunteers so that they will continue to be an asset to your organisation.

Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives

Institute for Volunteering Research

## Four key principles of volunteering

<b>Choice</b>	Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved;
<b>Diversity</b>	Volunteering should be open to all. In some situations, however, certain types of organisations can justify why their volunteers should come from a particular category (e.g. women only);
<b>Mutual Benefit</b>	Volunteers offer their time unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. There is a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer benefits & is personally fulfilled;
<b>Recognition</b>	There must be explicit recognition that valuing the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and government.

## Motivations and benefits

It is essential that you understand the reasons why volunteers might be attracted to your organisation's opportunities. Once you understand these you can adapt your promotional material to improve its appeal. Volunteers are motivated by many different things but here are some of the prime motivators that have been identified by recent research:

Fill a gap in the community

Feel needed/recognised/important

Use spare time and have some fun

get training & experience

Improve career prospects/gain a reference

Gain confidence

Commitment to a cause or organisation

Be part of something

Wanting to give something back

Make a difference/help others

Use existing skills / share skills/learn new skills

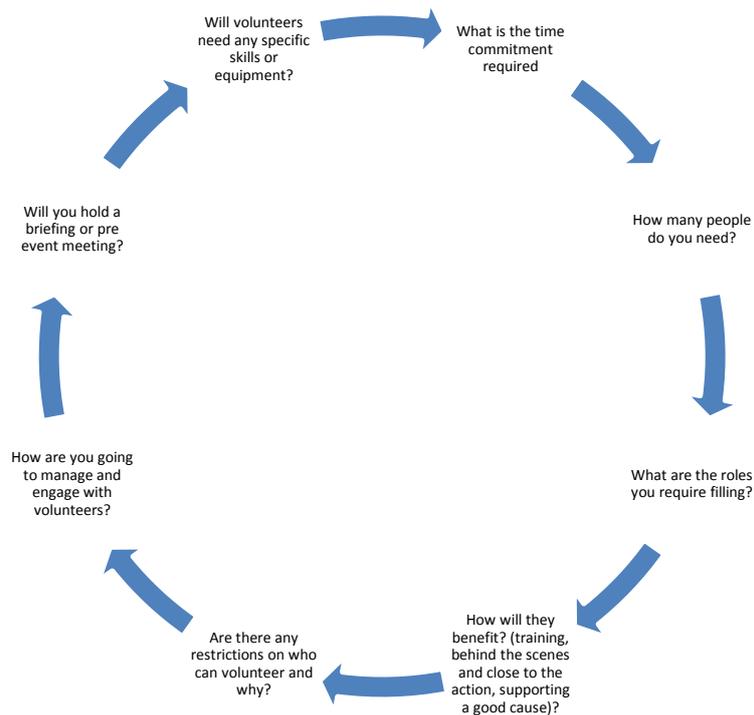
Get out of the house/make new friends

## Volunteer Recruitment

There are many places from which to recruit volunteers but here are some suggestions:



[www.volunteersuffolk.org.ukk](http://www.volunteersuffolk.org.ukk) is Suffolk's main portal for volunteer recruitment. The website enables you to set out your requirements and to attract the right volunteers from the many individuals who use the website to find opportunities. Before you list a volunteering opportunity on the website you need to consider the following questions:



Once your opportunity is listed, you will receive an email alert each time a person expresses an interest in it. You should aim to respond to this initial enquiry as soon as possible and certainly within five days with more information about the role and how to apply for it. You may wish to consider issuing a **Volunteer Role description** and/or a **Volunteer Application Form** (see appendices).

At the very least, you should ensure your volunteer knows what's expected of them and what they will be doing. If possible, schedule an induction session and/or issue a **Volunteer Induction Pack** as set out in the appendix. As the volunteer Manager you must satisfy yourself that you have prepared your volunteer well for any issues or risks they may face. The **Volunteer Induction Checklist** may help you to perform this vital task.

Finally, you will inevitably hold personal data relating to the volunteers you recruit, so you must familiarise yourself with the GDPR requirements. The **Other Resources** section of this toolkit has a link to the GDPR briefing produced by Community Action Suffolk.

## Looking after your volunteers and retaining them

Volunteers are becoming more essential than ever in the third sector. Treat them with the same respect and appreciation that you give to your colleagues. After all, without volunteers what would your income be? Without volunteers would your charity still be even running?

Volunteers want to feel that they have made a valuable contribution. Expressing your thanks to them both during and after their volunteering session, along with feedback on how they have contributed, is of the utmost importance. It can also be useful to send a survey link to volunteers after they have completed a volunteering session, through which they can provide feedback on their experience. Finally, make sure you act upon feedback you receive: it might make all the difference to your future success.

Having systems and policies in place and good communication should all help you to retain your volunteers. You might also think of some additional ways in which you could further enhance the volunteering experience within your organisation. These might include:



You might also consider how you handle poor performance by volunteers. Although this might not be common, volunteers can take time to settle into a role and might need tolerance of initial failures whilst they adjust to your requirements.

## Volunteer rights and responsibilities

To ensure that the volunteering relationship works well for both the volunteer and the organisation, it is useful to consider the things a volunteer might expect from the relationship:

### Volunteer rights

- Clear understanding of the role
- To have a named contact for support
- Sufficient information, induction and training to be able to perform the role
- Payment for legitimate expenses
- Health and safety/insurance protection
- Freedom from exploitation
- Participation in decision-making
- Opportunity for personal development

Your volunteers will be representing your organisation whilst they are with you so it is essential that you make them aware of their responsibilities to you. This will probably form part of their Volunteer Agreement and induction process:

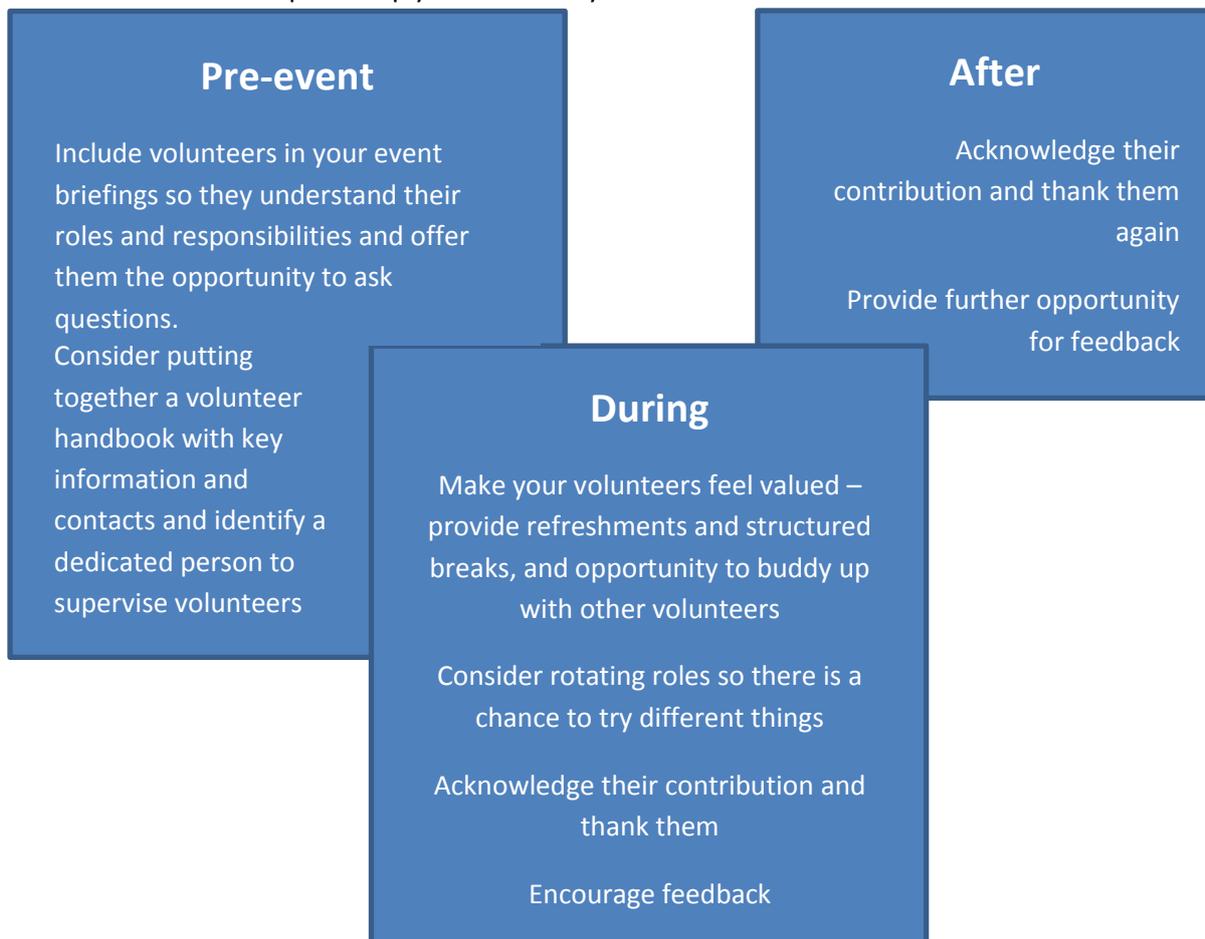
### Volunteer responsibilities

- To work within the organisation's policies and ethical framework
- To do what is reasonably expected of them to the best of their ability and in an appropriate manner
- Where appropriate, to treat information as confidential
- To undertake any commitments given
- To undertake training where necessary
- To share concerns

## Event Volunteering

Volunteering opportunities take many forms. Some are regular, some intermittent, and others are one-off or event volunteering opportunities. The principles of volunteer management are broadly the same for all types of volunteering but some aspects of the volunteer management process are different, perhaps more challenging, for a one-off event.

Here are some useful tips to help you look after your volunteers:



For general advice on event management, Community Action **Suffolk's Introduction to Community Event Planning** is an excellent resource. It is particularly focussed on community-led events and looks at how to plan a successful event, the challenges you might face and how to overcome them, and how to engage with volunteers.

## Volunteers and the law

You will find many definitions of volunteering in official documents but there is no single definition of a volunteer in law. Because of the increased professionalism often required of volunteers, there can arise the thorny issue of "when is a volunteer not a volunteer?" It is not always just a question of a person being paid or unpaid. There is a grey area within the law, which judges and tribunals will often interpret as they see fit. Often they may debate whether it is a question of the "spirit" rather than the "letter" of the law.

A church organist "volunteers" his services, but the church pays him an honorarium of £200 a year, as a thank you. It could be argued that the £200 is a wage and therefore the organist is a paid employee and subject to tax. It could also be argued, given the number of hours worked, that the church is guilty of paying below the minimum wage. If the organist had submitted a travel expenses claim with itemised journeys of around £200, then this would have been acceptable.



A volunteer with a charity providing mentoring and support services to vulnerable clients undergoes extensive training and then commits to working every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and this is stipulated in a letter of agreement. By stipulating the hours of work, the organisation could be seen as treating the volunteer as an employee, albeit unpaid; in which case the volunteer would come under employment law. It is, however, acceptable to request a minimum number of hours or shifts per week or month, providing that the actual hours are mutually agreed but not set down in a contract.

For example:

- for a volunteer box office assistant it may be important to ask for at least one "shift" a month because they could forget how to use the computerised system if their volunteering were less regular. It is agreed that the volunteer would look on the box office rota and sign their name against one of the shifts for the following month. The choice of shift rests with the volunteer.
- for a volunteer who visits or keeps in touch with a vulnerable client by phone, it would be acceptable to ask for a weekly commitment to avoid the client feeling isolated and lonely. It would be up to the volunteer and the client to agree the timings of visits or phone calls.

You must also ensure that your volunteers enjoy the same quality working environment as your paid employees. This means that they are equally subject to and protected by Health and Safety law, equality legislation etc and that you apply the same attention to their rights under these as you would with your paid employees.

It is not our intention to worry you and stop you taking on volunteers! Rather, it is to urge you to be careful and bear this grey area of the law in mind. It is why within this Toolkit we talk about volunteer "roles" or "tasks" rather than "job" descriptions and "volunteer agreements" rather than "volunteer contracts".

## Impacts of volunteering

It is useful to be able to quantify the impact that volunteers make on your organisation. This information can be used for many purposes:

- To include in your annual report or other corporate documents
- To form the basis of news stories that will improve awareness of your organisation
- As evidence of community participation when making funding bids
- To feed back to volunteers
- To help to improve the profile of your organisation

These are some of the things that you might wish to quantify:

Time given by volunteers, expressed either as the total number of hours given or as the notional financial value of the time given

Number of clients that have benefited from volunteer interaction

Qualitative effects on clients of volunteer interaction

Amount of money raised by volunteer fundraisers

Benefits to the organisation of volunteer involvement (e.g. ability to assist more clients or increase in range of services offered)

Number of volunteers that have moved into paid employment

## A few statistics

According to the UK Civil Society Almanac, twelve million people volunteered at least once a month in 2017. Of these, more than half volunteered with a sports club or at a group activity. Events' volunteering is very popular in the UK and around 40% of people who volunteer have done so at an organised event.

People aged 26-34 years old are the least likely to formally volunteer with only 15% volunteering once a month versus 22% overall.

Women are slightly more likely to take part in any form of volunteering but informal volunteering in particular.

People from higher socio-economic background and well-educated backgrounds are more likely to volunteer.

Volunteering rates are higher in rural and less deprived areas, with 30% of people living in the countryside formally volunteering on a monthly basis and 31% in the least deprived areas.

## Other resources

There are several websites that provide advice, guidance and resources for volunteer co-ordinators:

- [www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](http://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)
- [www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)
- [www.greaterlondonvolunteering.org.uk](http://www.greaterlondonvolunteering.org.uk)

Community Action Suffolk runs the following relevant courses:

- Introduction to involving volunteers: support and retention
- Introduction to involving volunteers: planning and recruitment
- Introduction to Community Volunteering: Level 1 Award
- Introduction to volunteers and the law
- Dealing with challenging volunteer situations
- Introduction to Community Event Planning

For more information go to [www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](http://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)